Dudley
CHRONICLE

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Father campaigns for new law over motoring deaths

LIFE BAN CALL ON KILLER DRIVERS

Report by Richard Guttridge

THE father of a young woman who was killed by a reckless motorist racing at 100mph has launched a campaign for a life ban for killer drivers.

Gerard McManus says those found to have caused somebody's death because of their dangerous driving should never be allowed to get behind the wheel again.

He wants to see a new law banning those convicted of causing death by dangerous driving from the road for life. His daughter Rebecca McManus, of Oldbury, was waiting at a bus stop when a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution sports car lost control and drove into her and her friend. The 21-year-old student was just weeks away from graduating when she died. Friend Harriet Barnsley suffered life-changing injuries.

Rebecca McManus

Mr McManus has launched a petition which was signed by almost 700 people in less than a week. It needs 10,000 names to be debated in Parliament.

Garage manager Sukvinder Mannan, aged 34, from Halesowen, who was at the wheel of the Mitsubishi, was jailed for eight years and banned from the road for 10 after being convicted of causing Rebecca's death on Hagley Road West, Bearwood, in May 2014. He had been racing another car at 101mph in a 40mph zone.

Privilege

Mr McManus, 53, said: "It wasn't just a momentary lapse of concentration. He will serve four years of an eight-year sentence, he will get his liberty back, probably take up employment but I don't think he should ever be allowed to get behind the wheel of a car again. He should not have that privilege again, or anybody else convicted of death by dangerous driving. "

Mr McManus said he did not want other families to experience the same pain that his family had because of the actions of dangerous drivers.

He said: "Families who have to go through losing somebody in a fatal collision – it stays with them for the rest of their lives."

The petition can be viewed at www.petition.parliament.uk/petitions/191856

Rebecca, a promising poet who had studied A-levels at King Edward VI College, had just completed a degree in English at the University of East Anglia, Norwich.

ACTORS FOCUS ON LAUGHS IN PLAY ABOUT A PANTO

Andrew Wood, Sandra Jones and Pete Goldsmith are among the actors in Out of Focus at Kingswinford Methodist Church

AN AMATEUR theatre group's latest play is, aptly enough, about the challenges of putting on a play.

Wordsley Amateur Dramatic Society is set to perform Out of Focus, a comedy written by Peter Gordon.

The play tells the story of an unfortunate double-booking of a church hall, and the consequent gathering of an odd mix of characters who eventually unite to produce a panto.

Alliances are forged and switch during the rehearsals in the run up to opening night and events finally culminate backstage.

In another fitting touch, the play set in a church hall will be performed in the society's regular venue of Kingswinford Methodist Church.

Entertain

The long-running society, founded in 1924, has been based at the church on Stream Road since moving there in 1967.

They seek to entertain audiences with a wide variety of plays, ranging from farces to thrillers, with three different productions a year.

Out of Focus will be directed by the society's chairman Dave Southall.

It will be on from April 26 to April 29, with tickets costing £7 and £6 concessions. These can be bought by calling the box office on (01384) 353662, or via the society's www.wordsleyamdram.com website.

Further information for those interested in joining the society is also available by calling the box office number, visiting their website or by emailing wordsleyamdram@outlook.com

BUSINESS

Meat business is creating more jobs

A GROWING Black Country meat business aims to achieve £1 million a week turnover.

The next phase of Town and Country Meats' growth comes tomorrow (Friday) with the opening of a 15,000 sq ft retail and production site in Brierley Hill. It will create an initial 18 jobs with another 10 on the retail side to be added by the end of 2017.

Managing director Gary Walker, who started the business 11 years ago, said that the new site at Hurst Business Park, off Peartree Lane, would employ another 24 staff by next March.

CRIME

Bell stolen from church grounds

A 600-year-old bell has been stolen from its position on display at a church in Dudley.

Police have launched an appeal after the bell was taken from the grounds of St James' Church, Wolverhampton Street. It is believed thieves broke through the gates at the church to steal the bell overnight on Monday. It is not known how they managed to lift the heavy object.

Cast around 1425, the bell was previously at Dudley's Top Church.

COUNCIL

Two hours of free parking to help shops

COUNCIL bosses have confirmed plans to run a free parking trial in four areas across Dudley borough in an effort to boost trade.

Shoppers visiting Dudley Council car parks in Sedgley, Dudley, Brierley Hill and Halesowen can enjoy up to two hours of free parking from April 24 to July 2.

People who want to take advantage of the trial will need to print and display a free parking ticket from the machines that are already in place.

Councillor Hilary Bills, cabinet member for environmental services, said: "The intention is to encourage people to visit the shopping areas across the borough."

INSIDE

TRADERS IN MARKET CALL

PAGE 2

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CONTENTS

PETER RHODES	6
LETTERS	7
CLUBS	8
THE TICKET	25
BRAIN GYM	31
PROPERTY	33
MOTORING	37
SPORT	43 & 44

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Vicious thug loses appeal over jail term

Marlon Bills – 24 year term

A THUG from Dudley who threw his ex-girlfriend from a third-floor window before attacking two police officers with a knife has had his 24-year sentence upheld by top judges.

London's Appeal Court heard that Marlon Brant Bills, 45, of Himley Road, had been locked up after Birmingham Crown Court was told that Bills lured Lisa Turner to his flat despite being subject to a restraining order. "That was a bad mistake because he used the opportunity to carry out a determined and ruthless attack, which nearly cost her life", said Mrs Justice Chema-Grubb.

He terrorised her with a knife, threatening to kill and rape her.

Ms Turner tried to defend herself but was overpowered by Bills, who pushed her through the bathroom window.

She managed to grab hold of the sill with one arm but Bills 'deliberately peeled his terrified victim's fingers off the window sill' and she fell three floors onto the concrete below, suffering serious back injuries.

When police arrived Bills attacked them with a knife, carrying on his frenzied assault even after being Tasered.

Bills' case went to the Appeal Court as he challenged his prison sentence, claiming it was far too tough.

He was originally convicted of wounding and two counts of attempted wounding.

After being condemned as a dangerous offender, Bills was also ordered to serve an extra five years on licence following his release.

Dismissing the appeal, Mrs Justice Chema-Grubb, sitting with Lady Justice Rafferty and Judge Jeffrey Pegden QC, said: "The total sentence, although severe, was just and proportionate in respect of this very grave offending."

Crime spree burglar is jailed for three years

A 34-year-old man, who went on a crime spree while in a drug induced stupor, has been sent to prison for three years.

Shaun Mitton broke into a house in Cemetery Road, Lye, and drove off in the owner's Toyota Corolla after stealing the car key during the burglary, a judge heard.

Four days after that February 20 raid he smashed a window at Cradley Heath Labour Club, searched the bar and escaped with three bottles of spirits, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Mitton struck again, on February 26, breaking a window at the Indiluxe restaurant in Stourbridge and stealing a laptop computer.

But the thief left a trail of clues for police investigating the crime, revealed Miss Heather Chamberlin, prosecuting.

His fingerprint was on the frame of the window through which he climbed to get into the house. A smear of blood that matched his DNA was found at the Labour Club.

Mitton, who had several previous convictions including two for burglary, was recognised by officers when they saw CCTV images of the restaurant break-in.

Mr Antoine Muller, defending, said: "He admits being given several chances to get off drugs but cannot get on top of his addiction, although he still hopes to conquer it one day."

Mitton from Highgate Road, Dudley, pleaded guilty to three burglaries and the theft of the car.

He was sent to prison by Judge Simon Ward.

Funding cuts risk crisis in schools, say union

NEARLY 500 teachers could face the axe under Government plans to shake up the way it pays for education, claims a teachers' union.

Figures from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) show funding will drop by nine per cent in Dudley under a new national formula, meaning schools in the borough will lose more than £18 million.

There could also be a loss of 496 teachers by 2019, which includes 139 from secondary schools, according to the union.

A borough councillor has now called on the Government to look at the plans again.

At a full council meeting, Councillor Ian Cooper, cabinet member for children's services, was asking the authority's chief to urge ministers to re-think the plans.

The Government is consulting on a change in the way it funds schools, which it claims will make the system less 'unfair'.

But according to the NUT individual schools could lose as many as 18 teachers, as well as hundreds of thousands of pounds in government funding.

In some cases it equates to almost £600 per pupil, although there are big differences and at other schools it could be as little as £44 per child lost, with no teachers axed.

Pupils

Councillor Cooper said: "All of the headteachers from each school have written to the parents to describe the impact of the cuts, which I think shows how serious the situation is.

"It will mean that classes have more pupils, which will result in less attention to each child in the class. There is more and more pressure being applied to schools and hard working teachers.

"All schools are going to face a crisis situation within the near future.

"My other concern is that teaching assistants, who work with individual students and pupils because they need more help, could be under threat too."

Kevin Courtney, general secretary of the NUT, said: "Parents cannot sit back and watch their children's education harmed by this bargain basement approach to schooling."

Traders unhappy at new contract

Uncertainty over their future has sparked a protest by market traders including, right, Wayne Thomas

MARKET traders fear a new contract with Dudley Council could mark the end of Dudley High Street's outdoor stalls.

Some traders claim the council has omitted certain key rules and regulations – such as chronic illness and holiday cover – from a new contract and says the authority refused to meet them to discuss these changes.

Trader Wayne Thomas, who runs a vaping stall, said: "The market could close as a result. Traders would have no security. A few are already moving."

Len Lenihan, of Dudley Market Traders Limited, which currently runs the market, said: "The council is not acting in a fair manner and should be speaking to market traders."

Chosen

The contract is changed every two years. It sees a firm chosen to manage the market. A new one will be coming into effect on July.

Roy Eaton, whose family have traded on the market since the 60s, said: "The market traders believe that their livelihoods are at risk."

Stuart Connelly, council head of visitor economy, said: "Dudley Market Traders Ltd, which currently runs the market, will be given the opportunity to bid. If successful, it would have the right to impose its own terms and conditions. If a different company is successful, it should also be able to do the same. The council's aim is to ensure the right management team is in place to create a buzzing, thriving market in the town centre for years to come."

A petition backing traders has more than 3,000 signatures.

Vineyard mulls over its success

THE corks are popping as a vineyard is celebrating success after winning a hat-trick of national awards for its wines.

Halfpenny Vineyards, near Dudley, won silver and two bronze titles for its white wines from the Independent English Wine Awards.

Staff at the facility said it was great their products are being recognised.

The vineyard's Tom Hill 2015 dry-white wine won silver, while its Mercia 2015 dry-white won bronze alongside its Sparkling White 2014.

Ben Godbehere, sales and marketing assistant, said: "It just goes to show the quality of wines in this country, more specifically in this area."

The vineyards at Bobbington were founded back in 1983 at a farm site.

Easter music in concert at church

A CHURCH is to host a performance of Gabriel Fauré's moving Requiem on Good Friday.

The free admission concert, which will also include other music, will take place at St Paul's Church in Long Lane, Blackheath at 7.30pm.

Appeal over pot-bellied burglar with fake police ID

A CROOK who is believed to have been behind a series of distraction burglaries posed as a police officer to dupe elderly residents into letting him into their homes during raids in the Black Country and Birmingham.

It is thought he carries fake ID and claims to be an under-cover officer needing to use a home as a lookout. Once inside he searched properties and stole cash, jewellery and credit cards.

The man has been described as white, around 6ft tall and of a heavy build, and has been described by several victims as having a large 'pot belly'.

Detectives are linking 13 burglaries that have happened since March – four in Sandwell, four in Birmingham and five in Coventry.

It is also believed that he has an accomplice who acts as his lookout and the two men have driven away in a car similar to a silver Rover 45 or 400.

Detective Constable Tom Lyons, from West Midlands Police's CID, said: "The worrying thing is that the man appears to have some kind of fake identification with him. The victims say that he is very convincing and, on nearly all occasion,s he claims that he is an under-cover officer and needs to use the house as a surveillance lookout.

"What is unusual is that the offences have happened across the West Midlands and not in one specific area.

"We really need people to come forward if they have any information so that we can put a stop to his crimes."

Queen's honour for health boss

THE chairman of Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has been officially appointed as Member of the Order of the British Empire.

Doctor David Hegarty was presented with the award by HRH The Prince of Wales, after being named on Her Majesty the Queen's New Year honours list.

The MBE was awarded for Dr Hegarty's services to health, which includes his roles as being a GP Partner of the Wychbury Medical Group, chairman of the West Midlands Clinical Senate and chairman of Dudley CCG, which serves a population of 315,000 people.

Dr Hegarty described receiving his MBE as a 'genuinely humbling experience'.

New spring ale is going on sale

A BLACK Country brewery has created a new beer for the spring. Hopden Ale will be on sale at Holden's pubs by the end of this month. The 4.9 per cent ale is named for Holden's Hopden Brewery in Woodsetton.

Brexit 'madness' blamed for more hate crimes

PCC David Jamieson

FIGURES revealing a spike in hate crime in the West Midlands after June's EU referendum vote have prompted West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson to describe Brexit as 'total madness'.

Around 500 incidents of hate crime were reported to West Midlands Police in the month following the decision to leave the EU. But since then the number of recorded offences has halved, as revealed in a report identifying the challenges of Brexit to policing.

Discussing the report at the Strategic Policing and Crime Board, Mr Jamieson said: "We are taking a huge leap backwards into an abyss of unknown depth. It was an act of total madness leaving the EU, and we have to ensure that what divides us from Europe does not divide us from each other."

Unsettling

West Midlands Police Chief Constable Dave Thompson said: "We would encourage people to come forward where they feel there is hate crime. It is an unsettling period and we are all cognisant of that."

Asked what he thought were the main potential challenges facing the force as a result of Brexit, he identified the UK's integral role in the European Union's law enforcement agency, Europol.

He said: "We find the partnership with Europol really quite important."

Policing minister Brandon Lewis has already confirmed that the UK will seek to continue membership of Europol.

However, no non-EU states are full members and cannot lead any of Europol's operational projects. Approximately half of the current 13 operational Europol projects are currently led, or co-led, by UK police.

Leisure centres saved as outrcry sparks U-turn

DUDLEY Council has backed down over its controversial leisure centres plans for the borough.

Proposals to close leisure centres in Dudley, Stourbridge and Halesowen and build two new facilities in their place sparked uproar.

Council bosses insisted 'all options' had been on the table and that it had followed Sport England's recommendations by proposing to move forward with two centres.

Now regeneration chief Councillor Khurshid Ahmed says he has listened to the views of the public on the controversial plan.

Also, opposition Conservative and UKIP councillors had insisted they would not support the two leisure centres option – putting the controlling Labour group in a difficult position as it does not command a majority on the council.

Councillor Ahmed said it was possible a new facility would still be built and two others refurbished.

The change in plan is believed to have been prompted by the weight of opposition from the public and opposition councillors. This included a campaign to save the centres led by former councillor Tracy Wood.

Almost 5,000 people signed a petition against the council's original closure and build plan, which bosses said would save money.

Renovated

Councillor Ahmed said: "We want to go forward with three as they are and that will be the guidance given to the scrutiny committee. Some might be renovated and improved.

"The view was if we had modern facilities they might become easier to manage and attract more customers. It was recommended by Sport England that we needed to be looking at two.

All options are still on the table. Until you test something, you don't know. It is important to get different views and we welcome that. But they need to be cost-neutral services."

Councillor Ahmed said council chiefs had been locked in talks with the opposition over the way forward.

He added: "Doing nothing is not an option and we believe that residents in Dudley deserve better.

"We have been having cross-party discussions about this and will be referring this to the scrutiny committee to consider all options."

Vet to feature on new TV dog show

TV work for Dudley vet Girish Thakral, a partner at Blacks Vets, with one of the dogs he has helped, Amber

A BLACK Country-based vets is to be part of a new TV programme which showcases pet owners and their pooches as they complete a series of challenges.

Blacks Vets, which has branches in Sedgley, Dudley and Oldbury, is set to appear on BBC Two show, Me and My Dog: The Ultimate Contest.

The firm's partner, Girish Thakral will appear on the show after he appeared on Channel 4's 'The Job Interview' last year. Now the practice has been asked to provide veterinary expertise on the new BBC four-part show, that sees dogs and their owners compete in a range of mental and physical challenges.

Presented by Chris Packham and set in the Lake District, the TV show is being aired on Tuesday night. It sees eight hopeful contestants and their canine companions battle it out in a series of challenges that tests their agility, training and, ultimately, their bond with their owner.

With 23 years of veterinary experience and special expertise in cardiology, Mr Thakral is a familiar face to clients at Blacks' flagship Accredited Veterinary Hospital in Dudley.

He said: "My focus was on making sure that the dogs remained happy and healthy throughout all of the activities."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Woman denies hiding suspect

A WOMAN from Dudley has denied assisting a man accused of murdering Birmingham teenager Kenichi Phillips.

Shaleana Samuels, aged 25, is charged with allowing Isaiah Wright-Young to hide at her flat between October 6 and October 7.

At Wolverhampton Crown Court, she pleaded not guilty to that offence and three unrelated counts of possession with intent to supply drugs. Samuels, of Elmbridge Way, Dudley, was granted unconditional bail and will stand trial on November 27.

Betting shop shut for the big race

A BETTING shop closed shortly before one of the biggest gambling events of the year – the Grand National – on Saturday.

Those in Sedgley who wanted to take a punt on one of the horses in the big race at Aintree on Saturday, would have discovered the doors shut at the William Hill branch on the High Street.

A spokesman for William Hill confirmed the closure, citing commercial reasons. He added: "Sadly it means locals will have had to walk a bit further to place their Grand National bets."

Grand Slam Darts tickets go on sale

TICKETS for the Grand Slam of Darts go on general sale this today IThursday).

The 32-player cross-code event sees stars from both the PDC and BDO systems competing across nine days at the Wolverhampton Civic Hall, also televised live on Sky Sports.

Tickets are limited to eight per person available from the Wolves Civic Box Office on 0870 3207000 or online at via the www.theticketfactory.com/PDC website.

Geologist is ready to rock with talk at pub

A WORDSLEY pub is hosting a talk all about Black Country rock, the sort under your feet, not what you eat or bands with guitars.

Geologist and museum curator Chris Broughton will be explaining the geology of the Black Country at The Rose and Crown in High Street, Wordsley, tonight (Thursday) at 7pm. Admission is £2.50.

He will explain how the raw materials found in the Black Country helped fire the Industrial Revolution.

Charge over stabbing

A MAN has been charged with wounding after a 28-year-old man suffered stab wounds near Netherton Health Centre on March 12.

Marcus New, aged 24, of Washwood Heath Road, Birmingham, will appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on April 20.

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COUNTY NEWS

Vigilance urged on dumped waste

FARMERS, landowners, businesses, and members of the public in the West Midlands are being asked to be more vigilant after a number of incidents where large amounts of processed or baled waste has been dumped.

Over the last 12 months the Environment Agency in the West Midlands has seen an increase of illegally dumped waste on public and private land. Anyone with information on illegal waste activities, can log onto www.crimestoppers-uk.org or call 0800 555 111 or via the Environment Agency Incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Time to help birds and bees

BARRATT Homes, in partnership with the RSPB, is encouraging residents of new homes in the Black Country to put a spring in the step of local wildlife this season.

The homebuilders have teamed up with the RSPB to give customers five top tips to create a home for wildlife in their garden this spring and do their bit for British wildlife.

They include opening a bee B&B, creating a mini pond and looking after butterflies. For step-by-step guides to each of activity, visit www.rspb.org.uk/homes.

Primary choice: £53k premium

PARENTS in the West Midlands face paying a premium of almost £53,000 to live near a primary school rated as outstanding, research has found.

Those in the region are paying the highest 'primary school premium' to live in an admission area of a school that is rated by Ofsted as outstanding, compared with living near a school that requires improvement.

The research combines house asking price figures, from website Rightmove, with data provided by 192.com.

Marling the darling of city folk event

FOLK singer-songwriter Laura Marling will be one of the headliners at one of Birmingham's main music festivals. She is playing on the Sunday night of the Moseley Folk Festival.

This year's event takes place in Moseley Park from September 1 to 3.

The Friday night headliner is Amy McDonald with The Magic Numbers second on the bill. Saturday's line-up is headed by Argentinian-Swedish indie folk singer-songwriter and guitarist Jose Gonzalez.

Singer to be indie pub

FORMER Inspiral Carpets singer Tom Hingley is to play a solo acoustic concert in Wolverhampton.

He will be appearing at The Newhampton Inn in Riches Street on April 21 with tickets priced £7. Tom featured on many of the band's chart hits including This Is How It Feels.

Councils told they can share part of £500m to help with road repairs

AS public uproar over the state of our roads continues, councils in the Black Country and Staffordshire have been reminded they can bid for a share of almost £500 million to deal with repairs.

The pot of cash is being made available by the Department of Transport to help fill potholes and make other road repairs. It is hoped the funding, which will be for schemes across England from 2018 to 2020, will also help tackle congestion.

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said: "We are investing record amounts on our roads – spending more than £23 billion on providing better journeys for motorists. We are also committing a further £1.3 billion up to 2020 to cut congestion and provide important upgrades to ensure our roads are fit for the future."

Meanwhile a major roadworks scheme lasting 18 months has been announced to improve a busy section of the A449, which is a gateway into Wolverhampton. Changes will be made to the road between Junction 2 of the M54, at Fordhouses, and Springfield Lane. Residents and businesses in the area will be consulted on the details of the scheme before it gets underway in September.

Council bosses say they will seek to minimise disruption while the works are carried out.

The aim is to improve access to i54, the Wolverhampton Business Park, and the Junction 2 employment area. The scheme is expected to be funded by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership 'Local Growth Fund'. A drop-in session to see more details and discuss the scheme will be held on April 18, at St James Church, Taunton Avenue, Fordhouses between 2pm and 8pm. For further information or to send a comment call the council on 01902 551155 or email transport.strategy@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

Finally, roadworks on a stretch of the M6 have been completed in time for the Easter getaway.

Highways England said the work to repair damaged concrete and waterproofing material at Junction 7 for Great Barr had ended ahead of schedule thanks to the use of a new rapid-setting concrete.

An army of 38 repair specialists worked some 9,723 hours overnight and weekends. But it will be short relief for regular users of Midlands motorways with an 18-month scheme between Junctions 1 and 2 on the M5 due to get under way after Easter.

It's that sinking feeling

TOP OF THE POTS

THE Chronicle's mission to highlight the worst potholes in our region is off to a flying start with readers flagging up some real road horrors.

Last week we featured many pictures and reports of potholes sent in by readers from areas such as Cannock, Wolverhampton, Kingswinford and Bloxwich.

Today we can reveal more pothole-plagued hotspots endured by motorists every day.

Michelle Adkins highlighted the problems around the busy Hill Top island in Hednesford. This picture, top left, shows just one of a string of similar potholes which have to be tackled at the island where the Rugeley Road and East Cannock Road meet.

Horrendous

The mother-of-one said: "It's a real bone-shaker. The whole island and the roads around it are covered in holes of varying depths. It looks more like a track than a main A-road in parts.

"I can't believe that main roads are allowed to get in this terrible state and then are just left.

"This island is next to two schools and a garage as well as being the road to Rugeley. There is so much traffic on it and cars are bouncing in and out of horrendous holes."

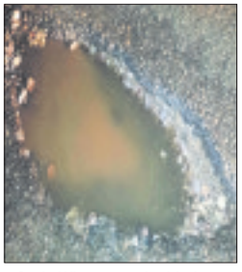
The island is less than two miles from the notorious Five Ways Island in Heath Hayes which itself has received 38 reports to the county council about the condition of the road.

Both islands were recently pointed out to Staffordshire County Council highways chiefs by Cannock Chase MP Amanda Milling who was 'assured that both are scheduled for work'.

Rachel Jenkins also shared her picture with us on Twitter of a damaged car. She said: "This happened in 2013 in Cat and Kittens Lane, Featherstone, and the pothole is still there now."

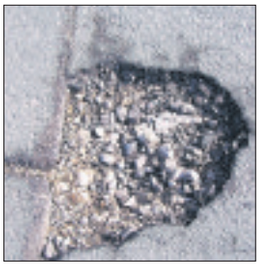
Just one of many where Rugeley Road and East Cannock Road meet

Damaged to a tyre done in Cat and Kittens Lane, Featherstone



Craig Winter sent in this from Bardy Lane in Longdon

Colin Woodward of Hednesford had to replace a tyre costing over £116



Just one of many in Heath Street and Blewitt Street, Hednesford

This one in Hednesford with phone to give idea of the depth

Tithebarn Road in Rugeley, WS15 2QW is particularly bad, says Mr S Davies, with a huge deep pothole right in the centre of the road and several others in the road too.

"It is like being on a dirt track as we drive along there, and only four weeks ago, the front suspension spring snapped on our car, which cost us almost £200 to have repaired."

"There is also another deep pothole in the middle of Fortescue Lane, just round the corner from Tithebarn Road."

The A499 between Kingswinford and Kinver has a number of potholes. The worst are just before the junction with Lawnswood Road and after the traffic lights at the Stewponey, says reader C Nash.

"Both potholes have been reported to South Staffordshire Council but to date no repair work has been done. They have been classed as non urgent but the size and depth of them would suggest that they are a significant health and safety risk particularly to those on bicycles."

Colin Woodward said he had contacted MP Amanda Milling about the state of the roads in Hednesford.

He has had to replace a tyre costing more than £116, due to hitting a pothole in the dark. And Craig Winter from Rugeley sent in a picture of a bad pothole in Bardy Lane, Longdon which he hit last week and had to buy a new tyre.

The Chronicle wants to identify the top 10 pothole blackspots in the region to flag up to our councils and we need your help. If you know of any pothole-ridden routes or deep holes please let us know. You can email details of the road, preferably with a picture, your name and any comments you would like to make to Sue.Attwater@expressandstar.co.uk or drop us a line at Editorial, The Chronicles, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

Restaurants and leisure £100m plan at Merry Hill

A NEW restaurant quarter and fresh leisure attractions are set to open at the Merry Hill shopping centre as part of a £100 million expansion, owners Intu have revealed.

Intu wants to modernise the shopping centre and has revealed more details about its major plans for a new 100,000sq ft extension.

The company is planning to invest in the expansion and modernisation of the centre over the next seven years.

And it has now been revealed that a new restaurant quarter is likely to be a big part of that, in addition to the centre's existing fast food eating area.

Bosses are also to prioritise adding leisure facilities as part of the revamp at the Brierley Hill shopping destination.

Bowling

Details have not yet been announced but it has been suggested that a bowling alley could be one of the leisure options being explored.

Dan Murphy, general manager at Merry Hill, said: "Our plans to build a leisure extension at Merry Hill are still at a very early stage.

"But will form an important part of our long-term commitment to enhance the centre's leisure offer and retail mix.

"We will be introducing a number of exciting changes and improvements to Merry Hill during this time.

"We look forward to announcing these in due course."

M6 roadworks done but M5's about to start

ROADWORKS on a stretch of the M6 have been completed in time for the Easter getaway.

Highways England said the work to repair damaged concrete and waterproofing material at Junction 7 for Great Barr had ended ahead of schedule thanks to the use of a new rapid-setting concrete.

A team of 38 repair specialists worked some 9,723 hours overnight and weekends to get the job done.

Highways England project manager Jessica Kenny said: "The material cures quicker and gains density as it dries, meaning that repair crews can work faster to carry out repairs without having to wait as long for it to dry.

"Safety is always our number one priority and these repairs were vital in helping us to protect this busy stretch of road for years to come."

But it will be short relief for regular users of the Midlands motorway network as an 18-month scheme between Junctions 1 and 2 on the M5 due to get under way just after Easter, which will mean a lower speed limit and warnings of traffic travelling at a snail's pace.

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Hospice hosts egg hunt as unit prepares for revamp

A HOSPICE will host an Easter coffee morning and family fun day for the community on Saturday.

May Stevens Hospice will host a huge Easter Egg hunt around the grounds of the hospice, and a special visit from Paw Patrol's Marshall.

There will also be raffles, bottle and Easter egg tombolas, Easter-based games and a wide array of cake, tea and coffee donated by Starbucks Merry Hill, with all the proceeds raised during the day going towards patient care at the hospice.

The event is free to enter and hospice staff are urging the local community to join them in enjoying the day and saying a 'fond farewell' to the day services unit, which has served local families for 25 years.

The Hagley Road charity's Bradbury Day Unit will be undergoing a £3 million redevelopment starting in May 2017, in order to increase capacity so that they can meet the demand for their services.

The work is expected to take at least 18 months, and will enable the charity to increase their attendance capacity by 87 per cent.

Laura Millard, community engagement officer at Mary Stevens Hospice, said: "It's going to be such a fantastic family day, and we'd love to see loads of local children and their families here enjoying the day. As it's the last coffee morning we'll host here, we're going bigger and better than ever before."

The event is from 10.30am in Mary Stevens Hospice Day Services Unit.

School shut early due to a gas leak

THE Easter holiday started early for pupils at a Sedgley secondary school after it closed for two days due to a gas leak. The High Arcal School closed on Wednesday and Thursday of last week.

Pupils in year 11 were due to sit an art exam which has had to be rescheduled to April 24 and 28.

A post on the school's website from headteacher Jo Bull said the closure was due to ongoing issues with a gas leak. The statement said: "We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but the health and safety of all students and staff must come first. All planned revision sessions for Easter will take place as planned."

The school will reopen on April 24 at 8.40am

All that jazz at Bonded Warehouse

A FIVE-PIECE jazz band will be performing in Stourbridge tomorrow (Friday). Lynda Angelis and her band will take to the stage at the Bonded Warehouse in Stourbridge at 7.30pm. Tickets £8.

Traditional shop fronts encourage trade

The traditional Dudley Fountain Arcade

SHOP fronts are to be spruced up in an effort to make Dudley town centre more attractive.

Some of the town's most historic frontages could also be protected under council plans.

It will see proposals for a requirement for new or altered shop fronts or signage to 'contribute to the overall appearance and character' of the streets.

The report states: "Well-designed shop fronts and adverts not only serve positively to enhance the character of a property and upgrade the appearance of the street scene, they are an essential contributor-supporter of retail health.

"The creation of quality streets can materially improve the commercial viability of an area and the businesses within that area and its attractiveness to investment.

Arcade

"Fountain Arcade in Dudley town centre is an excellent example of an early 20th century covered pedestrian shopping alley designed to be a comfortable and stylish shopping experience, away from the dirt and clatter of the street."

Improvements or replacements of shop fronts should 'maximise opportunities to improve character and appearance'. Traditional designs will also be encouraged to be retained.

The report continues: "Where previous alterations or additions have resulted in features of interest being obscured or concealed by a more modern fascia, owners and operators are encouraged to remove the more modern sign and reveal and restore these traditional elements."

Multi-million pound music school backed

A MULTI-MILLION pound music performance school with 600 places will be created in Brierley Hill, after the ambitious proposals were backed by planners.

The school for musicians will be opened at The Waterfront, creating some 50 jobs.

The three-storey office building known as Cable Plaza will house the academic facilities to teach higher education and post graduate music courses.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, cabinet member for planning and economic development, said the plans 'ticked all the right boxes' for redevelopment of the area.

Dudley Council is contributing £25,000 towards the build with further funding coming from the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and private partners.

Councillor Ahmed said: "This is really exciting and we are now doing what we can to make sure that they get the right funding and that this goes to plan. It ticks all the right boxes. It will help redevelop the Brierley Hill area, which is something we are desperate for.

"It is brilliant that the school will specialise in a certain subject and give students the best possible route for education status. Dudley Council is putting funding forward and the rest will be contributed by the institute itself.

Campus

"More jobs will be created for the area too which is always a positive. We are keeping the pressure on the Black Country LEP to ensure this growth."

The campus will include a lecture theatre, classrooms, practice rooms, a library, recording studios, an independent radio station, a sound and light control room, a live music venue, a retail outlet, licensed bar and student accommodation.

The institute's fully-accredited degrees will specialise in performance, production, education, management and composition.

In addition to its degree students, close links will also be forged with local community groups, further education providers, organisations and charities through various workshops, weekend courses and events. Planning documents states that the ground floor is divided into smaller practice rooms and recording studios, the first floor includes a number of classrooms, a library, and ancillary spaces. The second floor has a staff room and offices.

Pub chain back Hugh's charity rides

Cycling ace Hugh Porter, Lisa Bockhoefer of Compton Hospice and Marston's MD Richard Westwood

CYCLING legend Hugh Porter has urged riders to sign up for a second epic charity challenge.

The four-times world pursuit winner is confident this year's Round the Wrekin sportive will be bigger and better than the successful inaugural event in 2016.

With five weeks to go until the event on May 21, Mr Porter said he was hopeful the sportive could attract 1,000 participants.

Money raised from the event will go to Compton Hospice in Wolverhampton. Banks's will be paying an upfront sponsorship fee plus £5 for each rider who signs up for the event after the 500th entry.

Richard Westwood, Marston's managing director, said: "We are really excited to be sponsoring the Banks's Round The Wrekin Cycling Sportive in aid of Compton Hospice. Last year's sportive was a huge success with 600 cyclists taking part and it raised more than £21,000. We are hoping even more people will join us on one of the three routes this year to raise even more money for this worthy cause."

Cyclists can complete one of three routes from Kingswinford Rugby Club – the Hugh Porter 38km, standard 102km and epic 160km – with a route into Shropshire. To register visit www.roundthewrekin.co.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

Brexit may hit zoo breeding schemes

BREXIT could impact on the free movement of animals as well as people, says an expert at Dudley Zoo.

It is feared that zoos in the UK could lose the right to breed and protect some of the most vulnerable species without a European Union deal.

Currently zoo animals have free movement across the EU, which means they have a better chance of finding a breeding partner.

David Beeston, of Dudley Zoo, said any changes in free movement of zoo animals will make their lives more difficult.

Man Tasered in town's High Street

SHOPPERS looked on in horror as a man who was threatening to harm himself with broken glass was stunned by a police officer using a Taser gun.

Police were called to High Street in Stourbridge to reports that a man with a broken glass bottle was threatening to hurt himself.

A 38-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of a public order offence, following the incident that happened on Tuesday, April 4, at 3.15pm.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "He was Tasered due to concerns he could injure himself or the public."

Purcell's King Arthur in concert

BRIERLEY Hill Choral Society will be joined by the Central England Camerata for an operatic concert at a Black Country church next month.

The society is performing King Arthur by Henry Purcell in St Michael's Church in Brierley Hill on May 6 at 7.30pm.

Tickets for the concert, conducted by Rory Freckleton and featuring guest soloists, are £10 from society members or by calling (01384) 376354.

TV comic has Serious Joker date at town hall

TV comic Lee Nelson is to bring his new tour to Dudley later this year.

The comedian, real name Simon Brodkin, hit the headlines for a number of high-profile stunts, including throwing fake money at ex-FIFA boss Sepp Blatter.

He brings his show Serious Joker to Dudley Town Hall on December 1. Tickets costing £20.

For more information on all of the shows at Dudley Town Hall, or to book tickets, visit www.boroughhalls.co.uk or call (01384) 812812.

Pub house conversion

A FORMER pub is set to be converted into a house that could eventually be used by multiple occupants.

The plans for the Rollers Arms, in Foundry Street, Coseley, have been lodged with Dudley Council.

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HOME VISITS AVAILABLE

IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

10p for a carrier bag – that's not a bargain

OKAY, since October 2015 larger retailers have been obliged to charge 5p for carrier bags. One of David Cameron's madder "green" ideas I would suggest. But still, you can't blame the shops for it, can you?

But in that case, why is one major retailer charging customers 10p for each bag, double that dictated by government? Home Bargains, I would love an explanation.

❒❒❒

OF course, charging for carrier bags is not an entirely new concept. You will probably remember that back in the 80s, Kwik Save used to charge for the bags, but there was never any pretence that it was about environmentalism. The argument was that by keeping costs down, Kwik Save could offer lower prices, and give customers a choice about whether they needed bags.

More importantly, Kwik Save also offered customers a selection of used cardboard boxes, free of charge. That's what I call a green policy. And when you moved house, you could always go into Kwik Save for a tube of peppermints, and walk out with a giant box to put your belongings in. Why don't today's supermarkets do the same? The other week I saw a member of staff in one of the big four who was stamping on these perfectly usable box to throw them away. Which doesn't seem very green at all.

❒❒❒

OF course, infuriating though it is, the carrier bag nonsense pales into insignificance compared to the lunacy of government attempts to tell us what cars to drive. Back at the turn of the century, Gordon Brown was telling us to all buy diesels, offering tax incentives to make the switch. Still kept the limo for himself, just like they all do, but diesel was definitely the way forward.

Then, in 2009, it was decided that this was not enough, and the scrappage scheme was introduced. I hate scrappage, for two reasons. Firstly, because of the stupid ungrammatical name. Since when has scrappage been a word? In the hate stakes, it's right up there with signage, stakeholder and train station.

But secondly, I hate the destructive side of it, the way more than 500 old Jaguars and 100 old Porsches were needlessly destroyed just because the politicians thought we should drive diesel hatchbacks. I even feel a tinge of sadness at the lost Austin Maestros and Lada Rivas. Surely if they had survived this long, they warranted a little more respect.

Anyway, almost a decade later, scrappage is back on the agenda. Diesel is now public enemy number one, and the Government is reportedly considering using taxpayers' money to persuade people to scrap the dirty cars that a few years ago politicians were telling us to buy. Perhaps it might be an idea to scrap a few of the meddling politicians instead?

Muggers just making money without doing any work

Mary Berry feast but would hubby Paul prefer a bucket of KFC?

Doctor Who companion Pearl Mackie ticks so many politically-correct boxes

Voters must decide if they want to keep this serial defector Douglas Carswell

Desperate? No way, just plain wicked

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

BEING mugged is traumatic and our hearts go out to Jeremy Corbyn's 23-year-old son Tommy whose mobile phone was snatched by a thief on a moped. But I doubt if many share Tommy's view that "I'm sure the guy who did it was more desperate than bad." Behold, the enduring woolly-left belief that all crime is the result of society's inequalities or government policy and all criminals are to be pitied. The truth is that some people are plain wicked.

BY coincidence, as Tommy Corbyn was empathising with his mugger, two other motorbike-riding phone thieves were being jailed in London. They had snatched 18 mobiles in a single day. Using the Corbyn analysis, they were presumably 18 times more desperate than Tommy's attacker and 18 times more to be pitied. Or maybe they were just a pair of thugs out to make money without doing any work.

DOCTOR Who's new companion Pearl Mackie will be a mixed-race lesbian who calls herself Bill. Rarely in the history of drama has one character ticked so many politically-correct boxes. Curiously, we are also told to expect a return of some of the Doctor's scariest enemies, the Cybermen. Surely in these enlightened times that should be Cyberpersons. Or Cyberfolk? Or plain Cybers?

I WROTE recently about "the British Isles." A reader says this term is no longer politically correct. My apologies. I was referring, of course, to the British/Irish Atlantic archipelago. That really trips off the tongue, doesn't it?

CELEBRATING her golden wedding, Mary Berry prepared a perfect banquet of perfect plump king prawns, perfectly pink lamb and a perfect cream cake glazed with mirror-perfect chocolate icing. It was all so relentlessly perfect. I found myself hoping to see her hubby Paul hiding in his shed with a bucket of KFC.

AS the food industry comes under yet more pressure to reduce sugar levels, I am reminded of that childhood treat of yore, the well-buttered banana-and-sugar sandwich. It was even better without the banana, wasn't it?

A TEAM of British scientists has created a sieve capable of turning sea water into fresh drinking water. Based on the wonder material graphene, the sieve will undergo trials to see how effective it is. Already, there is talk of an end to worldwide droughts, prosperity for the developing world and deserts turned into lush, blooming breadbaskets, consigning famine to history. However, some of us of a certain age will be thinking: Tomorrow's World. Remember it? It was the BBC science series, launched in 1965, which introduced viewers to a succession of breakthroughs and inventions which were allegedly going to transform the planet. Maybe some did but the abiding memory is of Tomorrow's World being a sort of Sargasso Sea from which bright ideas never reappeared. Moral: some concepts simply never make it from theory to practice. Today, a dazzling British invention is poised to transform our planet. Again.

BLAME human nature. If you offer people £300 a day to do nothing, they will take it. I doubt if anyone is surprised at the latest report showing some members of the House of Lords are filling their pockets simply by turning up for a few minutes. The Lords is too big, too lazy and far too undemocratic but it is also the ultimate old codgers' luxury club for MPs on the way out. They all have a vested interest, not only in keeping the Lords but expanding it, as we pay the bills. Ironic, isn't it, that in the bad old days when the undemocratic House of Lords was full of hereditary, unelected peers, it commanded far more respect than it does today?

IN some academic circles, the use of terms such as "man up" and "forefathers" is seen as sexist and threatening, and students can be penalised for using them in essays which count toward their degrees. A document from Hull University revealed at the weekend warns students: "Failure to use gender-sensitive language will impact your mark." You know, the more I look at "penalised," the more I worry.

MY recent item on Gibraltar takes me back to a strange assignment, videoing the lads of the Fusiliers as we all abseiled down the Rock. In those days video cameras were enormous and heavy, and filming required both hands. This meant I had to step backwards off the Rock with no rope to hold on to, and trust in the blokes above. They let me down without letting me down. I bet that doesn't easily translate into Spanish.

THE voters of Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, must be wondering whether their Popeye-look-alike MP Douglas Carswell will ever make up his mind. Carswell defected from the Tories to UKIP, resigned from Parliament and successfully fought a by-election under his new banner. Now, he has quit UKIP to become an Independent. The serial defector claims that because he has not joined another political party it's not necessary for him to fight a by-election. Well, he is wrong. Clacton voted for a UKIP MP not an Independent, and the voters there should be given the opportunity to say if they want to retain this flibbertigibbet MP or dump him.

TALKING POINT

Rubbish dumpers should be binned off

"IF you have been affected by any of the issues in this programme . . ." said the ITV continuity announcer at the end of a particular soap.

I have, I thought, so I wrote to the makers of Emmerdale. Sorry, the National Television Award-winning Emmerdale, as the announcer likes to make clear.

But it wasn't to congratulate them on said award. Nor was it regarding one of their so-called hard-hitting storylines.

My letter was about a much bigger problem sweeping the country. Litter.

You see, one of the characters, a young girl, was sitting at a bench outside the Woolpack. She got up to go school and left an empty crisp packet behind her.

Surely, the young actress was not brought up to just leave her litter behind, I questioned. Impressionable young children could be watching the show and think it's okay to not take rubbish with them, I protested.

But my correspondence was, appropriately, just swept under the carpet. "Thank you for your interest" and "your comments have been noted" were all they could muster up.

But for me this is a serious issue. I am forever seeing drink cans, food waste and wrappers, empty crisp packets, you name it, strewn into a hedge or just left by the roadside, and, often within sight of a bin. Whatever the reason, there is no excuse, just laziness, disrespect and disregard for this green and pleasant land in which we live.

And, while you may think teenagers are the biggest culprits, a Keep Britain Tidy campaign revealed the worst litter louts were 35-to-54-year-old men, exactly the age group I fall into. So, I can only apologise for my fellow brethren.

Thankfully, there are people who care as much as I do. Keep Britain Tidy's Big Spring Clean campaign has seen volunteers take to the streets and in my hometown of Cannock alone more than 20 bags of rubbish were collected within a short area.

Even those bastions of quality journalism, Good Morning Britain carried out their own survey, purposely dropping litter to gauge public reaction, with many being horrified by the brazenness of such an act.

But what can be the long-term solution? Spending taxpayers' money on more bins that probably won't get used? On-the-spot fines? There has even been talk of bringing back a scheme that was around when I was a child, to get money back on bottles.

Admirable. But pointless when most law-abiding, reasonable people correctly use their recycle bins.

One thing is for sure, there are enough people that care about the environment to make a difference, though it shouldn't be left to others to clean up after people. Now, don't get me started on flytipping . . .

MARK SHIPP

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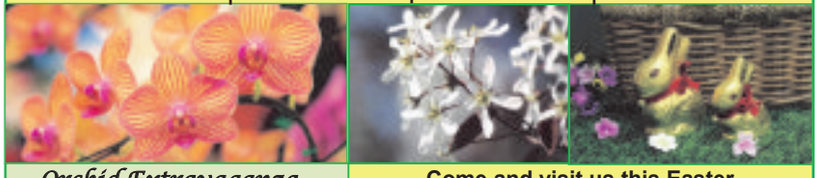

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Brexit bus message was a disgraceful stunt

WHAT an astonishing letter from B Williams claiming that no pro-Brexit politician had ever said that the money saved by withdrawing from the EU would go to the NHS.

If my memory serves me correctly, there was a large red bus touring the country carrying four pro-Brexit MPs – Boris Johnson, Liam Fox, Michael Gove and David Davies – and on the side of that bus, in very big letters, was the following slogan: 'We send £350m every week to the EU. Let it be spent on the NHS instead'.

I remember Boris Johnson giving an interview standing in front of the bus and pointing at the words.

This was one of the most disgraceful political stunts of all time because it did not take in account the money we receive back from the EU in the form of farm subsidies, or the building and infrastructure grants. The real figure is approximately £160m and we have since been told that it would not be spent on the NHS anyway.

I strongly suspect that many people were influenced by this clever trick and, had the truth been told, the vote would have ended with a majority in the other direction. Theresa May now has the nightmare task of trying to keep us in the single market (something she has been told to do by big businesses) whilst at the same time attempting to take back our own law-making procedures.

The EU will not give us an easy Brexit. If it did, it would be the green light for other countries to do the same. Mrs May needs to get a firm grip. If she does not, the whole thing could degenerate into an absolute shambles.

PETER SIMPSON
Dudley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL
dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Code of Practice: Our policy is to correct errors as soon as we can. The Chronicles adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at www.ipso.co.uk. If you are unhappy with the accuracy of a story, write to The Editor, Chronicles, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Independent Scotland - let us vote

ONE wonders if there is any chance that the English will get a vote on home rule for Scotland.

I think if we did many would vote in favour of an independent Scotland, just to get rid of Mrs Sturgeon, like we voted to get rid of the EU's Mr Juncker.

It would be interesting to sit back and watch Mrs Sturgeon explain to the Scottish people how she is going to fill the employment gaps that develop round Faslane and Lossiemouth when British forces are pulled south of the border, causing many job loses.

Also when the British Open no longer is played on Scottish golf courses, how will Mrs Sturgeon explain that loss of income to the Scottish people around Gleneagles and St Andrews?

Yes Nicola, perhaps you should test the little grey cells before opening your mouth?

EWART J JOHNSON
Warley

Debtors rewarded and savers penalised

MUCH of the blame behind our last financial meltdown was attributed to people taking out mortgages they couldn't afford and greedy financial institutions letting them. They were rewarded for their fiscal indebtedness with lower interest rates while those of us who rely on income from our hard-earned savings, were penalised by paltry rates.

Now the Financial Conduct Authority is proposing that customers who cannot pay off their credit cards should be, again, rewarded by having their interest rates reduced, waived or cancelled. Financial institutions are clearly allowing customers to get into situations where their debt could take tens of years to clear. Only a matter of time, I suppose, before those of us who clear our credit cards every month have to pay a charge for being allowed to do so.

MICHAEL CALLADINE
Kingswinford

Listing is no building safeguard

THE Fiddlers Arms in Lower Gornal is yet another example of a building with a 'local listing', a category that turns out to mean nothing whatsoever.

Developers laugh at this impotent classification and planners choose to turn a blind eye.

Dudley's historic environment department, supposedly there to safeguard such buildings, has been reduced to one person with merely an advisory role.

You need only go back a couple of months to see how this played out in nearby Upper Gornal. The Leopard pub had local listed status, the next moment retention and restoration were deemed 'unviable'.

Result: The Leopard (where the great Eliza Tinsley success story began) was a pile of rubble and a block of ugly maisonettes went up in its place.

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Donation to Stroke Association

Grange(E) Guild

CHRIS Holton presided over the monthly meeting at Grange Court, Stourbridge, and gave a warm welcome to 33 members.

She read out the minutes from the previous meeting which were accepted as a true record and duly signed.

An outing has been arranged to Stratford-upon-Avon on April 28, to include a river cruise with afternoon tea.

Treasurer Jill Attwood gave a breakdown of all income and expenditure for the previous month and informed members that a donation will be sent to the Stroke Association which was chosen by members as the charity for this year.

The AGM followed when all the present committee members agreed to carry on for a further year. Chris gave a full report on the previous year's events since the last AGM.

Members enjoyed hot cross buns at Easter, a summer tea party, a theatre outing, a harvest supper and a Christmas party. These events were thoroughly enjoyed by all. Margaret Tew gave a talk on the history of the Townswomen's Guild and how it all began and continued to grow into what it is today.

She held everyone's attention and was thanked on behalf of the members.

Fish and chips were followed by tea and coffee and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Four lucky ladies won raffle prizes.

Meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month. For details call 01384 832439.

Ann bowls them over to win shield

Wollaston E TWG

THE March meeting, which incorporated the AGM, was attended by 42 members with Julie Willets in the chair.

The nominations for officers and committee were read, with the inclusion of two new committee members, namely Ann Turner and Gill McKenzie.

The guild's local rules were read out by Hazel Needham and their adoption was proposed and seconded.

The chairman said she was enthusiastically looking forward to an interesting coming year. The bowls competition shield was handed to Ann Turner and the competition cup to Elizabeth Grove.

Jean Dunne and Ann McKenzie were presented with long service certificates and badges and retiring committee members, Sue Llewellyn and Pat Steele received gifts in appreciation of their service.

Dr Julian Sonksen from the organ donation team at Russells Hall Hospital gave a most interesting presentation on organ donation.

Raffle prizes went to Hazel Needham, Jean Lloyd Jones and Elizabeth Grove.

Debate over rules of beetle drive

Kingswinford TG

THE Annual General meeting was held at the Community Centre in High Street. The event was well attended although there were a few apologies for absence.

Business proceeded smoothly as there was no election necessary. Pauline Bird had offered to fill the gap on the committee, created as Margaret Whitfield is unable to continue at present. She was presented with a beautiful planter of growing spring flowers for her efforts as a committee member.

The secretary, treasurer and chairman gave their annual reviews. The section leaders reported on the last year and gave hints of things yet to come, but no final details.

Events being organised by the Federation include a card making day, an inter-guild arts and crafts competition, the annual lunch at The Copthorne Hotel, Brierley Hill and an inter-guild quiz. Members were reminded that every member is entitled to attend the Federation AGM on April 19 at 2pm in the Wollaston Room in Stourbridge Town Hall.

There are also a few seats available on the trip to the National Arboretum at Alrewas in May.

Raffle prizes were won by visitor June Bradley, Josie Smith, Sue Wilson and Marion Allman. There then followed a short beetle drive after a short but heated debate on the rules. Joyce Major won the prize and everyone was rewarded with a chocolate for participating.

Strummer time is here again

Dudley South Ladies Luncheon Club

AT the March meeting chairman Pauline Handley welcomed 30 members and visitor Pat Wood for a three-course lunch and entertainment by the Sedgley Strummers, a 15-strong ukulele band.

Yet again the meal had been excellent and served most efficiently by the friendly staff at The Lodge, Wellington Road, Dudley.

The Sedgley Strummers had everyone singing and tapping along to well-known songs old and new. There were songs from the roaring 20s, 1960s and 70s and of course the old favourite made famous by George Formby, Leaning on a Lamppost.

Meetings are on the second Friday each month, noon for 12.30pm. April's speaker will be David Berry on Humour in Retirement and there will be a bring & buy stall with an Easter theme of yellow/white.

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Fan told steward he would 'bite nose off'

A WOLVES fan who was refused entry to an away game for being drunk told a steward he would 'bite [his] ***** nose off'.**

Self-employed engineer Glenn Firstbrook, aged 36, of The Knoll in Kingswinford, was arrested and missed the club's 3-1 win at Championship rivals Fulham FC.

He pleaded guilty at Hammersmith Magistrates Court to using threatening behaviour towards gate steward Chirag Patel outside Craven Cottage on March 18.

Prosecutor Miss Arlene De Silva said: "He was refused entry at the turnstile and the steward took his ticket, saying he was too drunk.

She said that Firstbrook replied 'I'll bite your ******* nose off'. The police were alerted and he was arrested.

Ridiculous

Firstbrook claimed he had no more than two pints of beer prior to the match and only reacted when the steward 'smirked' at him.

When questioned by police he told them: "I just got a bit angry. It's the most ridiculous thing I have ever said."

The first-time offender has been a Wolves season ticket holder for the last three seasons as well as between 1996 and 2005.

His lawyer, Miss Annie Finn told the court: "He got very upset. He was walking away, but when he saw the steward smiling, to use his words he 'lost it'.

"He does not usually drink at games and feels he has let himself and the club down as a representative. He has spent time in police cells and feels embarrassment and remorse."

Firstbrook was conditionally discharged for 12 months, ordered to pay £85 costs and a £20 victim surcharge.

Wolves fan Glenn Firstbrook feels embarrassment and remorse after threat

Helping elderly avoid falls

A NEW service aimed at helping the elderly avoid and recover from falls has been launched in the Black Country.

Support on offer through the scheme in Dudley includes specialist strength and balance exercise programmes, home adaptations, gadgets and safety advice.

Dudley Falls Prevention is a partnership made up of Dudley Council's adult social care and public health teams, alongside the local Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS Foundation Trust.

Tony Oakman, a Dudley Council strategic director, said: "Falls represent the most frequent and serious type of accident in people aged over 65.

"Falls destroy confidence, increase isolation and reduce independence.

"Falls are not an inevitable part of the ageing process though."

Dudley Falls Prevention can be contacted by calling (01384) 814459.

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Jewel raiders' decoy is jailed for 10 years

A MEMBER of a gang that carried out a £240,000 robbery on a jewellers has been jailed for 10 years.

Steven Griffiths, aged 36, of Tippity Green, Rowley Regis, acted as a decoy for three armed robbers who raided SK Jewellers, on High Street, on December 31, 2016.

Steven Griffiths

They then targeted Jai Jewellers in Cape Hill, Smethwick, on February 10 this year.

Griffiths pleaded guilty at Wolverhampton Crown Court to robbery in relation to the SK Jewellers raid. He also admitted a charge of attempted robbery regarding Jai Jewellers.

On each occasion, Griffiths gained access to the shops by dressing smartly and requesting access via a buzzer.

At SK Jewellers, he held the security door open while three men armed with hammers and axes went in, smashing glass cabinets and taking £240,000 worth of jewellery before the panic alarm was triggered. That filled the room with smoke as the gang escaped.

They tried to do the same at Jai Jewellers, however, the plan was scuppered due to the shop having two security doors.

While Griffiths held the second open, the first closed, meaning the armed robbers,had to break through the door.

None of the armed robbery gang has been caught, except for Griffiths, who had 84 previous offences to his name.

Griffiths was pushed by the shop's quick-thinking owner into the gap between the two doors, before being locked into that space while the others escaped in a get-away car.

Trapped

He remained trapped until police arrived at the shop.

Mr David Bennett, prosecuting, said: "Both the robbery at SK Jewellers and the attempted robbery at Jai Jewellers were co-ordinated, professional efforts that caused serious damage both financially and psychologically to the owners of the shops. The defendant was not armed in either instance but he clearly had a part to play.

"Both shops are small, family-run businesses and there were children present on each occasion."

Mr Lewis Perry, defending, said that Griffiths had a long-standing problem with heroin and the robbers had taken advantage of this.

Judge John Wait sentenced Griffiths to 10 years for each offence, to run concurrently.

Jai Jewellers after the failed robbery during which Griffiths was trapped

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Rogue builders who preyed on the elderly are jailed over £100,000 con

ROGUE builders have been jailed for targeting elderly people in Dudley and Sandwell, cheating them out of more than £100,000 with unnecessary, over-priced and shoddy work.

Three men were sentenced to jail terms for running a fraudulent property repair business that targeted vulnerable people, following a three-week trial at Birmingham Crown Court.

The sentences came after a fourth man was sentenced on March 17 for his part in the scheme.

Lee Evans, of Solihull, Andrew Blythe, of Coleshill, Mark Hunt, of Birmingham, and John Brookes, of Erdington, were brought to trial following a lengthy investigation carried out by the National Trading Standards Central England Regional Investigations Team.

The court heard that the offences took place between 2007 and 2012 and that some victims – many retired and some in their 80s – were the subject of repeat offending.

Chimney

One paid nearly £130,000 over several years for work which experts estimated at costing around £14,000. Another victim in Dudley told the court how Evans and Blythe escalated a job from re-pointing to complete rebuilding of a chimney stack, the price soaring to £7,200. When the home owner refused to pay, Evans took his men off site, leaving her with a hole in her roof when it was snowing.

Evans, who ran LJ Evans & Son and LJ Evans Ltd with Blythe, was found guilty of four offences of fraud and was sentenced to five years in jail.

Blythe changed his plea to guilty to four offences of fraud on day six of the trial and was sentenced to four years and nine months.

The court was also told how Evans and Blythe often arranged for their victims to make cheque payments out to third parties. Of three men to whom cheques were made out, two were co-defendants, Mark Hunt and John Brookes, who had earlier both pleaded guilty to money laundering.

Hunt was sentenced to eight months, suspended for 18 months. Brookes received a sentence of 16 months in jail. The third individual has not yet been found.

Judge Roderick Henderson told Evans that he had been involved in 'the grossest cheating of vulnerable people'.

Builder Lee Evans – jailed

Widow in 80s among victims

THE daughter of an elderly widow who was repeatedly preyed on by rogue builders has spoken out after they were jailed (see story left).

The Dudley homeowner who fell victim while in her late 80s, was one of several consumers across the Black Country tricked out of large sums of money by a group carrying out unnecessary and grossly overpriced building work.

Speaking anonymously, her daughter said: "They are preying on vulnerable people. The first I knew about it was when I arrived one day to find scaffolding up and building materials, but no sign of any workmen. Then I noticed three invoices on the side in the kitchen, which totalled around £10,000."

Trading Standards told her that they were investigating the group, who it total conned around £16,000 out of her mother.

New home new baby for zoo's capuchins

The new arrival clings onto mom at Dudley Zoo

A BABY monkey has been born at Dudley Zoo, just days after the family moved into a new enclosure.

The tiny yellow-breasted capuchin was born to 13 year-old Dinya and nine-year-old dad, Willow, at the Castle Hill attraction.

The baby, yet to be named, arrived just days after the capuchins moved into their new home, the first part of the zoo's restoration programme as it prepares to celebrates its 80th anniversary.

Upper primates section leader, Pat Stevens, said: "This is Dinya's seventh baby and fourth here at DZG, so she's very experienced and even Willow is being an attentive dad and is looking out for them both.

"On the day of the birth we let the capuchins out just after 7am and two hours later we discovered the baby, so she must definitely be comfortable in the new enclosure to give birth outside."

The enclosure, which has cost £25,000, includes a climbing frame, ropes, foliage and high platforms. The capuchins' indoor quarters have also doubled in size.

Owner of dirty pizza shop fined £10,000

THE owner of a Dudley pizza shop has been fined £10,000 for 'extremely dangerous' lack of hygiene after dirty equipment came into contact with food and flour.

Balvinder Gill, aged 42, from Pizza Junction, in Union Street, pleaded guilty to nine charges of failing to comply with European Union provisions concerning food safety and hygiene.

A series of photos showing greasy and dirty work surfaces, equipment, floors and ceilings were taken by Environmental Health officers following a re-visit in February 2016, after he failed to act on a previous warning following a routine inspection.

Gill was ordered to pay a £10,000 fine, £1,489 costs and victim surcharge of £170 at Wolverhampton Magistrates' Court.

Chair of the bench, Sharon Powell, said that the matter was 'extremely serious'.

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Churches united in search for new home

TWO historic Black Country churches are looking for a new home after deciding to unite under one banner.

Hanbury Hill Baptist Church in Stourbridge and Halesowen Baptist Church have decided to solidify their relationship.

The 139-year-old Halesowen Baptist Church sold their building almost two years ago after it was deemed unfit for purpose but continued to meet in different locations.

In September the decision was made for Halesowen, which was left with just eight members, to join 187-year-old Hanbury Hill Baptist's Sunday worship and deacons meetings.

Unanimous

A unanimous vote by members of the two churches decided to go ahead with the partnership and it will be under the name, Hope Baptist Church.

The church is now looking to obtain a permanent home in Stourbridge where its larger group of around 150 members can worship.

Reverend Dave Morris, aged 59, who has been minister for Hanbury Hill baptists for six months, said: "Our vision is to establish a worship and community centre in Stourbridge town centre, within the ring road. We are in the market for a property that we can, subject to planning permission, either convert into a church centre or demolish what's there to make way for a new building."

He added: "Both churches have about 200 years of history behind them, this really is historic."

The move will be supported by a building fund, which has been collected over the last eight years by members of Hanbury Hill Baptist Church in Chapel Street.

Hanbury Hill Baptist Church secretary Diana Seeney, 75, who has been at the church for 50 years, said: "It's been great from our point of view to have them come in and join us. "From their point of view, this has opened up a lot of new and exciting opportunities.

"That is our long term aim but at the moment the church is going to be situated at Hanbury Hill.

"We believe God will lead us to the right place eventually."

"We just continue to look because we think to be in the town centre will open up a lot of work with students and shoppers. There are an awful lot of people on the streets in Stourbridge at night."

Hannah Crowley, left, and Ben Crowley, from Hanbury Baptist Church, with Rachel Westbury, centre, from Halesowen Baptist Church

£267m boost for region's schools, says education boss

SCHOOLS in the West Midlands are to benefit from a £267 million cash injection, according to Government education chiefs.

Education Secretary Justine Greening announced that schools across the region are to receive the funding in the hope it will create more than 24,000 extra school places by 2020.

The funding is also aimed at giving 200 new projects to improve and expand school buildings the green light.

The news comes as new Government figures show that almost 735,000 additional school places have been created nationally since 2010 – 74,000 of them in the West Midlands – with 93 per cent of new primary school places and 92 per cent of new secondary places created in good or outstanding schools in the region in 2015-6.

The funding allocated this week also includes £58m for West Midlands schools to invest in upgrading their school buildings and gives the go ahead to 200 vital school building work projects.

Fairer

Education Secretary Justine Greening said: "Our Plan for Britain is to build a fairer society. This investment of £267m in the West Midlands, together with our proposals to create more good school places, will help ensure every young person in the region has the opportunity to fulfil their potential."

The funding is part of the £2.4 billion of capital funding allocated to create new school places across the country, and to maintain and improve school buildings.

Dangerous driver jailed after police car chase

AN uninsured and unlicensed driver lost control of a car while attempting to escape pursuing police at more than twice the speed limit, a judge heard.

By John Scott

The silver Vauxhall Vectra with Stephen Emanuel behind the wheel clipped a kerb, spun across the road and careered into two parked cars, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Police had been alerted by a passer-by who saw the registration number being stolen from the same model of car in Netherton. Officers spotted the 25-year-old's Vectra bearing the stolen plates in Halesowen Road, Netherton, shortly afterwards.

The vehicle ignored a request to stop, performed a U-turn and accelerated away, forcing other drivers to brake and swerve out of the way as he raced through a red light at the junction with Saltwells Road.

Bend

Mr David Bennett, prosecuting, said the Vectra reached 80mph in a 30mph zone while speeding towards Cradley Heath along Halesowen Road before Emanuel lost control on a bend.

The prosecutor continued: "The nearside wheel hit the kerb, the car spun and crashed into two parked cars, causing considerable damage."

A pair of pliers and makeshift mask were found in the defendant's car, which was impounded by police following his arrest on March 7.

Mr Colin McCarraher, defending, said Emanuel, who had previous convictions involving 66 separate offences, had been turning over a new leaf after finding work and meeting a new partner, who was now pregnant.

"He has now lost their home and feels deeply ashamed after falling in with bad company. It was the worst possible decision to get involved in this incident," added the lawyer.

Emanuel, previously of Seamore Road in Lye, pleaded guilty to dangerous driving and was jailed for eight months with a 16-month driving ban.

Judge John Wait told him: "I do not know what you were doing that night but you were driving on false plates and had every reason not to want to encounter the police.

"You drove off at very high speed, endangering other motorists before losing control, causing untold worry and distress to people whose parked cars were badly damaged by an uninsured driver."

Pub conversion plan

A PROPOSAL to build homes on the site of a former pub in Gornal, which has been derelict for years, has been recommended for approval by planners.

Councillors have been advised to approve plans to part demolish The Good Intent on Vale Street and convert it into two homes. The plans were due to be considered by councillors yesterday (Wednesday).

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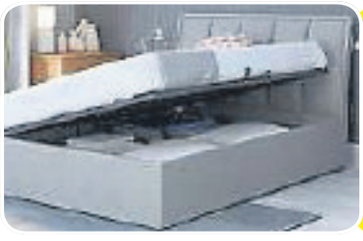

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Money is pledged on better path

PATIENTS affected by the merger of two GP surgeries have convinced health bosses to provide an extra £62,000 to carry out improvements.

Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) announced plans to relocate Links Medical Practice into Netherton Health Centre on the opposite side of Halesowen Road.

As a result, more than 3,000 extra patients will be attending Netherton Health Centre, with its roll of 7,500 patients and based 75 metres away.

But patients raised concerns about a poor route from the car park to the Netherton Health Centre building. Now the CCG has agreed to provide the additional funding to improve the access.

Work on the new footpath is expected to start soon.

Apartments plan at chapel

A FORMER chapel in Netherton will be turned into an apartment block, under plans which have been unveiled.

Built in 1810, the Old Chapel, in St Giles Street, was used by Champions Church until 2010 when it moved to a new building in Cinder Bank.

Now, after selling at auction last year for £132,000, the former church looks set to be converted for residential use with plans for nine apartments.

FOCUS ON NETHERTON AREA

Baptist church celebrates 250 years meeting in town

THE oldest Baptist church in Dudley is celebrating it's 250th anniversary.

The Dudley Baptist Church began in the reign of King George II during the 18th Century, and it began with meetings in Netherton.

Its first chapel was built at the corner of New Street and Tower Street but in 1933 they were forced to move when one of the roads needed to be widened.

Now, the church is situated on Priory Road, and was opened eighty years ago by the Earl of Dudley.

Today church goers continue to meet for worship every Sunday and its afternoon Sunday school is the oldest in the Black Country.

A celebration was held at the church last month to celebrate the impressive milestone.

Conrad Pomeroy, from Dundee, who joins the church as its next pastor in September, said: "Thousands of lives have been blessed by the work of this church over a quarter-millennium."

Beacon

He added: "Our prayer is that, by God's grace, the church will continue to be a beacon of hope in the heart of Dudley, by proclaiming the timeless message of salvation in Jesus Christ."

More than a hundred people visited the church in March to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Baptist congregation.

By Tom Oakley

Friends of the church came from as far as Eastbourne and Dundee to mark the occasion.

Guests enjoyed a buffet as well as an exhibition of old photos, newspaper clippings and historical items from the church archive.

An anniversary cake was cut by three long-standing members of the church including 82-year-old Elsie Brayne, better known as 'auntie Elsie' to generations of Sunday School children taught by her.

Visiting academic Michael Haykin ended the evening with an account of the life of Samuel Pearce, an 18th century Pastor from Birmingham.

The Sunday school still regularly attracts children from all across Dudley.

Church Elder Ernest Richardson looks at the exhibition to celebrate Dudley Baptist Church's 250th anniversary in Dudley

Chocolate treat in Easter quiz

AN 11-inches tall milk chocolate treat is on offer to a lucky youngster who can correctly answer questions about Netherton.

Free quiz sheets will be available at Netherton Library, on Northfield Road, and at the bakery Baked In Netherton, on Halesowen Road, or online at www.discoverdudley.org.uk website.

The competition is open over Easter.

Some answers are likely to be known or easily researched but others may demand a visit to Netherton, and while in town young visitors can enjoy free Easter-themed craft activities at Netherton Library.

Completed quiz sheets should be placed into one of the competition boxes at Netherton Library or Baked In Netherton. The closing date is noon on April 24.

Titanic links are explored

MORE than 100 years on it is a tragedy that still inspires worldwide interest – the sinking of the Titanic.

The fateful ship's connection to the Black Country, the Titanic's 15-and-a-half-ton anchor – was made by Noah Hingley & Sons in Netherton – is one of the aspects explored in an exhibition at the Dudley Archives until May 27. It features the collection of researcher and writer Andrew Lound at the Tipton Road venue.

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Care home gets seal of approval

A CARE home for adults with learning disabilities, autism and epilepsy has been praised by an independent watchdog for its quality of care.

Brickbridge House in Wombourne, has been given an overall rating of 'good' by the health and social care regulator, the Care Quality Commission.

The service provided by the home was rated good in all five categories – for being safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

In its report, the CQC praised staff for the support and kindness they showed towards residents, saying staff were also careful to respect residents' privacy and dignity.

The home offers a range of activities including in-house and community-based activities, such as cookery, arts, studying at college, and attending football matches, concerts, cinema and museums. The home is managed by Priory Adult Care.

Police retreat after fire crew attacked at travellers' site

FIREFIGHTERS were attacked by yobs as they attended reports of bonfires being lit at a travellers' site in the Black Country

The thugs in Rowley Regis hurled objects at a fire engine, damaging the windscreen and a back window, and surrounded a police car with officers forced to retreat.

From now on, firefighters will not attend the site in Cakemore Road unless they have a police escort.

Crews from Oldbury Fire Station were targeted by the yobs after being called out to tackle a number of bonfires on the site.

A West Midlands Fire Service spokesman said the incident had happened at a traveller community site at around 10pm on Wednesday, April 5.

Hooligans smashed the rear side window of a fire engine with a stone and drove at the vehicle head-on before throwing a metal scaffolding pole, cracked the engine's front window.

Oldbury crew commander Ian Nash said: "There were a few bonfires on the site. Our fire crew went in to put it out and were attacked by these people. They were driven at head-on by another vehicle to try and put them off. And had something like a scaffolding pole thrown, which cracked the front window. Police came and their car was surrounded, so they retreated, basically.

"Another two pumps arrived and we were instructed not to go as it was too dangerous. No-one was injured. A bit of glass went over the crew but that's it."

Crews from Haden Cross and Oldbury Fire Station were in attendance but the service said that any future visits to the site would require two fire engines and a police escort.

A fire service spokesperson said: "The incident involved a number of small fires in a traveller community site. The firefighters have come under attack from stones and withdrawn from the incident. Any future incidents to this site will require two trucks and an escort from police."

West Midlands Police said officers attended and spoke to members of the group. No arrests were made at the time.

Free school plans at Royal

PLANS to transform an historic fee-paying school into a free school have moved a step closer.

The Royal School, on Penn Road in Wolverhampton, has submitted further plans, including drawings, as part of the school's conversion to a free school.

The initial application was made in November.

If approved, it would see an extension to the site's primary school and creation of a new multi-use games area and car park.

Demolition

It would also see the demolition of part of the senior school building wing based on Goldthorn Road.

New drawings based on the works have been approved by council bosses. These include the installation of footpaths and further external landscaping works.

Nearly new glam for hospice

Front, bride-to-be Hayley Watkins, with back from left, Joanne Townsend and Amanda Bowen at Cradley Heath Liberal Club

A CHARITY sale which saw new and barely worn wedding and prom dresses sold has been hailed a 'great success' after raising hundreds of pounds.

Mary Stevens Hospice held the sale at Cradley Heath Liberal Club.

Dozens attended the event which saw the dresses, donated to the Stourbridge-based charity, sold in a bid to raise vital funds for the hospice.

Amanda Bowen, Deputy Head of Fundraising & Lottery at Mary Stevens Hospice Group said: "The event was a great success. About 30 to 40 ladies came through the door within the first couple of hours.

"We are thinking of holding another in a couple of months."

Amanda thanked the owners of the club, who allowed the charity to hold the sale free of charge.

Suits were also sold at the event, so fathers, husbands, boyfriends and sons were not left out.

The hospice is also holding a coffee morning at its Hagley Road HQ on April 15 between 10.30am and 1pm.

Gardener left man's drive blocked by skip

A GARDENER who failed to carry out work he had been paid to do, and left a skip blocking his customer's drive for eight months, has been ordered to pay more than £2,700 in fines and compensation.

Adam Morris, aged 31, from Scafell Road, Stourbridge, started working on Richard Newton's garden in Grazebrook Road, Dudley, in August 2015. Mr Newton paid £1,680 to Morris but shortly after he got in touch to say there had been 'some problems' and to expect a delay.

Tim Holder, prosecuting for Dudley Council, said that in total Mr Newton had paid out £2,125 but the job was never completed. Morris was ordered to pay £1,705 in compensation, £800 costs, a £250 fine and victim surcharge of £30.

District Judge Graham Wilkinson said Morris had 'repeatedly fobbed off' Mr Newton. The judge heard that Morris had been through a 'bad patch' due to difficulties in his private life.

High and low, snakes are go

DUDLEY Zoo keepers have introduced a new exhibit in the site's reptile house.

The attraction's three red-tailed green rat snakes are now living alongside two Borneo blood pythons in a newly renovated enclosure.

Sam Grove, senior keeper, said: "They're great species to put together as red-tailed green rat snakes are primarily arboreal, so stay high on the branches of the enclosure, while the blood pythons remain on the ground and spend much of their time in water."

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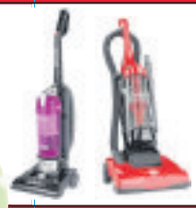

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New Christian centre rises from ashes of Zion

A CHURCH which burned down in a devastating fire is to rise from the ashes – and now new images of its re-build have been unveiled.

The Zion Christian Centre, which has been based in Halesowen for 40 years, is changing its name on Easter Sunday to the Lifecentral Church, and will also launch a new centre in Hagley.

In August 2015 the centre was ravaged by a blaze, which caused extensive damage to around half of the building on Little Cornbow, Halesowen.

Now artist's impressions have revealed what the renovated centre will look like, which is due to open in autumn of this year.

This includes the creation of a 400-seater auditorium to replace their former space lost in the fire.

The renovations will also see a modern, cladded frontage created, along with new offices and toilets.

Since the early 1980s the church has been in the centre of the town, known for its youth work and its wide range of community provision and activities.

An artist's impression of the new Christian centre, called the Lifecentral Church

Paster Leon Evans looks at the damage at Zion Christian Centre in 2015

Pastor

Originally known as Zion Pentecostal Church, it has also become widely known in the area as 'The Zion'.

The slogan of the renamed Lifecentral Church will be 'a place to discover life', and it will have a new, second location at on a site at Haybridge School on Brake Lane, Hagley.

Lead pastor, Leon Evans, said: "As many people will know, in the summer of 2015 a huge fire tore through the auditorium, devastating the heart of this community church.

"What happened in the next few months was inspirational – people came together to help, donations were made, walls were painted, equipment was loaned and the church not only continued to thrive but to actually grow!

"Now – after 40 years in Halesowen – we are excited by these developments.

"In addition to launching both Lifecentral Church as the new name on Easter Sunday, and a new location in Hagley, we will then begin a refurbishment programme at our Halesowen base.

"It will result in a new auditorium at the heart of the town of Halesowen, opening in the autumn of 2017.

"It's a remarkable story of what good things can come from a tough, challenging situation and of the life that can rise from the ashes."

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Mouth of the South has lots to chew over

Rob Beckett
Town Hall, Birmingham

THE toothy blond South London comic has a knack for spotting the absurdities lurking in modern life.

He even offers advice on fighting back against the nuisance 'have you had an accident at work' phone calls by wasting their time – 'yeah, I have, my 'ed fell off' – or how to ensure you never ever forget your password: It's idontknowmate, feel free to add 123, capitalise the I and underscore wherever you please.

On Saturday he shared with a full Town Hall his take on marriage, fatherhood, technology and, to the biggest laughs, Kit Kats, tumbledriers and the worst place in England. It's Corby.

He gets the teeth gags out of the way early on – if he lived in Africa he would have been poached by now – and refreshingly uses fewer expletives than most comics. I am not saying that you could take you grandmother in total comfort, but I am sure she would have a good time.

Beckett has an easy charm and is quick-witted, as shown in his banter with the front row. This included the schools pals Sophie and Fiona, who go together under the blended nickname Sofiona – "Fiona got her whole name in, she mugged you off Sophe".

The motormouth from the South may not be able to pronounce Birmingham properly, but he's welcome back anytime.

Caroline Quentin and Mark Addy as Lady Sarah and Sir John Hotham Pic: Pete Le May/RSC

Cavalier comedy capers

REVIEWS

by Leon Burakowski

The Hypocrite
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

HORRIBLE Histories meets Blackadder in Richard Bean's riotous farce, The Hypocrite, which is bringing belly laughs to a venue more accustomed to high drama.

If all history was as entertaining (and as saucy) as this play, set in 17th century Yorkshire at the start of the English Civil War, we would be a nation of expert historians. This co-production by the Royal Shakespeare Company and Hull Truck Theatre is to mark the Humberside city (don't dare call it a town) being UK City of Culture 2017, and has already been staged at the East Riding port.

Hence lots of local references to Yorkshire locations, rugby, etc, that may be lost on a Midlands audience. It doesn't matter because the gags come thick and fast from the pen of Hull-born Bean, the writer of West End hit comedy One Man Two Guvnors.

He brings to life the true story of Yorkshire MP Sir John Hotham, who tried to please both sides – King and Parliament – in the war and make himself a fortune at the same time. It was, as Bean saw from the research, a farce. Hotham's plan did not succeed and he ended up losing his head.

That is the starting point for the play as the disembodied cranium of Hotham explains how a combination of greed, cowardice and stupidity led to his demise.

The increasingly perplexed and desperate Hotham is portrayed with great comic energy by Mark Addy, constantly at odds with his haughty wife, played with droll wit by Caroline Quentin, who knows a thing or two about men behaving badly. The insults they hurl at each other are highly inventive and not repeatable here.

Slapstick

Into the mix throw a lovesick daughter, a camp pair of royal spies, grumpy Puritans – and Drudge, an ancient family retainer dealt a series of slapstick indignities (acrobatic Danielle Bird, in old man disguise).

The real injustices that fuelled the bloody civil war are raised by the strident folk song interludes from the impressive 'Ranter', played by Josh Sneesby, and Laura Elsworthy as level-headed Yorkshire lass, Connie the servant.

The Hypocrite is a treat, try to catch it before it ends its RSC run on April 29.

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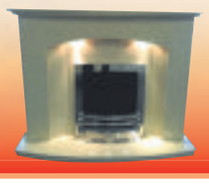

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Child's play at shopping centre

NICK Jr fans can visit intu Merry Hill for the chance to follow in the footsteps of their favourite TV characters.

The centre will be hosting Nick Jr All Stars experiences throughout the Easter holidays to keep families entertained for free.

They can learn the Half Shell Heroes' ninja moves, transform themselves into a Shimmer and Shine genie or create their own personalised number plate to join Blaze and the Monster Machines.

There will also be the chance to meet PAW Patrol's Chase and Marshall who will visit intu Merry Hill on April 19.

Families can hunt for more Nick Jr. characters and experiences by using their smart devices to scan images within the centre. Visit www.intu.co.uk/easter for details.

Dozens of arrests as cybercops fight crimewave on internet

WEST Midlands and Staffordshire police have smashed six cyber-crime rings – with an estimated 1.7 million victims – in the past 18 months.

The investigations, believed to involve more than 300,000 offenders worldwide, are among 24 complex cases recently handled by the 11-man Birmingham-based squad – dubbed the cybercops.

They range from lone wolf students bringing down college websites to organised gangs trading stolen credit card details on the Dark Web.

Official figures confirm that online crime now claims as many victims as 'conventional' lawbreaking across the UK.

Among the latest cons is Ransomware where the criminal hacks into a computer, encrypts its contents, changes passwords and does not reveal the new ones until the owner pays a ransom.

The Regional Organised Crime Unit cyber team, that also includes officers from Warwickshire and West Mercia, played a key role in the arrest of a dozen people suspected of using the web-crippling Netspoof stresser software to flood and wreck computer systems.

They also brought teenage hacker Grant Manser to justice last year. He pocketed £50,000 in four year selling malware on the Dark Web to almost 4,000 people who used it to flood websites with unwanted information, causing up to 250,000 sites to crash. The search ranged across Europe and the USA before leading to the Kidderminster home of the teenager.

In another case, a student ended up behind bars when tracked down after hacking into an exams grading system at the Birmingham University to ensure he got higher marks.

Other inquiries are 'live' so details are currently secret.

Scholarships for students

FIVE Halesowen College students have been successful in receiving a merit scholarship of £1,000 each and an unconditional offer from Aberystwyth University.

Amy Lake, John Mackereth, Jake McCarthy, Natalia Paluszek and Jonathan Tobin sat the scholarship exam and will receive the funding during the first year of their studies. Student Aiden Weaver also received an unconditional offer from the university as part of the programme.

Amy, aged 17, is studying art, drama and music; John, 19, computing and mathematics; Jake, 18, media, creative writing and English; Natalia, 17, drama, film studies and criminal law; Jonathan, 18, performing arts, creative writing and maths and Aiden, 19, is studying media.

Skaters get their bear-in

Jamie Blundell and Amy Holland with their Big Sleuth bear at SkateHut in Halesowen

IF you go down to Shenstone Trading Estate today you're in for a big surprise – SkateHut has a new member on their team, a giant white bear.

SkateHut is taking part in The Big Sleuth which follows on from the success of The Big Hoot in 2016 in aid of Birmingham Children's Hospital.

More than 100 giant bear sculptures will be leaving their paw prints all over Birmingham this summer, as the city gets set to become known as Bear-mingham.

Jamie Blundell, SkateHut's general manager, said: "When we originally set out to find a charity partner, Birmingham Children's Hospital was the charity that our staff kept mentioning.

"It seems that everyone at SkateHut knows of the amazing work that Birmingham Children's Hospital do and many of us have seen this at first hand.

"Taking part in The Big Sleuth is one of a number of fundraising events and commercial opportunities that we are hoping will raise as much as possible.

"In 2016 SkateHut raised £6,500 taking part in a few runs, a Zombie event and some in-store fundraising.

"We also sponsored The Big Gig series of events for Birmingham Children's Hospital."

SkateHut is now sponsoring their own bear, created by local artist and SkateHut employee, Amy Holland.

She said: "I'm keen for the bear to be a girl so that young girls can see that it's OK to do extreme sports and that they can be powerful and fearless."

Proposed closure of chicken plant could hit 630 workers

HUNDREDS of jobs could be at risk after a major Black Country employer announced it may be closing one of its factories.

The 2 Sisters Food Group has said it is considering plans to close its poultry processing plant at Bevan Way, Smethwick.

The factory currently employs 630 at the Alpha Business Park.

The food group said it would offer affected staff up to 200 alternative roles in the West Midlands and look to redeploy others throughout the group if it did choose to close the site.

The company, which employs around 1,500 in the West Midlands, supplies food to major supermarkets and has plants in West Bromwich, Wolverhampton and Smethwick.

A spokesman for the company, which owns a number of food brands including Goodfella's Pizza and Fox's Biscuits, said: "We can confirm we are consulting with colleagues about a proposal to cease production at our poultry processing site in Smethwick and, as a result, the site could close.

"The factory at Bevan Way is ageing and has significant challenges to meet the standards required by ourselves and our customers.

"We do not take this decision lightly and fully understand the impact if this proposal goes ahead.

"We are committed to our operations in the West Midlands."

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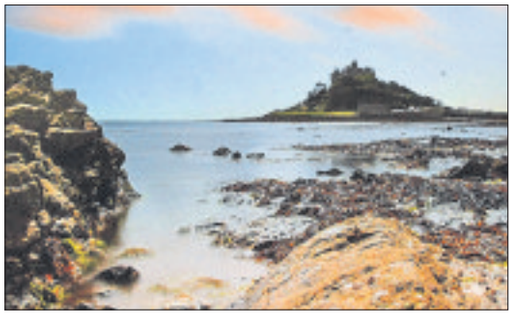
Sunset Over Mudeford, one of the photographs of display

Autumn Cometh, an atmospheric image

Sid Grigg with Peter Scott, Melvyn Dodd, Brian Smith and Rod Smith



St Michael's Mount, one of the coastal images on display

Swanage Quay, from the club's showcase

Woodland Path, one of the photographs on display at the Redhouse Cone

Camera club show best work

A CAMERA club will be staging an exhibition showcasing some of the best photographs its members have taken over the past three decades.

Wall Heath Camera Club (WHCC) is holding the 'Life through a Lens' exhibition at the Red House Glass Cone in Wordsley to mark its 35th anniversary.

Pictures on show range from vivid autumn landscapes to gritty monochrome portraits and wild animals in their natural habitat.

The event is currently on show at the venue and will run until June 3.

Sid Grigg, chairman of the camera club said: "At WHCC we feel photography is an enrichment; making observations, meeting new friends and acquaintances.

"The photography on show represents life as we see and experience it, with that little bit of creativity in the taking, and again in the processing and printing. We look to capture a split second in time and turn it into a pictorial image for all to see and enjoy.

"From beginners to advanced photographers we want to share our view of the world and invite people to share our journey through landscapes, portraits and wildlife."

The group formed in 1982 and has flourished. It welcomes new members regardless of experience, while the more experienced photographers are keen to share their knowledge and skills.

Among the shots on display are Adrian Whitehouse's dramatic coastal scenes, including stormy Boscombe Pier and beautifully illuminated Cromer Lighthouse; Eddie Barnett's nature shots with a striking vulture headshot; and John McAneny's avocet, a flash of black and white feathers against a soft, watery green.

Scenes from the Black Country include Richard Williamson's red-hued Autumn at Bumble Hole Bridge, and Melvyn Dodd's tribute to the glass-making industry with photographs of the Red House Glass Cone, in High Street, Wordsley. That's the venue for the display, open 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday and 11am to 4pm at the weekends. Admission free.

For further details visit wallheathcameraclub.weebly.com or call 07768021887.

Too many 'older white men' run new authority

THE West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has been criticised for being dominated by 'older white men' – by one of the candidates bidding to run it.

West Midlands Mayor candidate James Burn has also questioned the openness of the WMCA, condemning leaders for 'choosing their own colleagues' to hold them to account.

Bosses at the authority have hit back, with Wolverhampton council leader Roger Lawrence branding the comments 'a cheap shot from a candidate who is going nowhere'.

The WMCA has a board made up of the council leaders of the seven local authorities involved. They include Mr Lawrence, Steve Eling (Sandwell), Sean Coughlan (Walsall) and Pete Lowe (Dudley), as well as the leaders of Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry councils.

Green Party candidate Mr Burn, who is a councillor in Solihull, said: "People are rightly fed up of politicians that don't listen and plans that don't work for normal people.

"We've seen a growth in money and power in the West Midlands over the last few years, but it hasn't been shared out. One reason they haven't is because the authority is run almost exclusively by older white men who have chosen their own colleagues to scrutinise them and hold them to account."

Antiques expert is to give guest lecture

AN AUCTIONEER and television antiques expert has been invited to host the latest in a lecture series at Stourbridge Town Hall.

co-founder of Fieldings Auctioneers, Will Farmer, from Antiques Roadshow, is a returning guest for the Rotary Club of Stourbridge's celebrity lecture series.

Mr Farmer's presentation will focus on those items most of have thrown away but which are now worth a small fortune.

The talk on May 4 begins at 7.30pm. Tickets £10 can be obtained on (01384) 376865 or 877949, also on the door.

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Binman gets sack after swapping rubbish over

A BINMAN has been sacked after he was filmed switching rubbish between two bins in a Sandwell street to avoid having to collect it.

The worker lost his job after being caught in the act moving the rubbish outside a house in West Bromwich.

CCTV footage from the house showed him brazenly lifting the lids of the wheelie bins after checking the coast was clear before moving bags of rubbish from one to the other.

Homeowner Brij Dhande was left stunned when he checked the footage and saw what the sneaky binman had done. After being told on several occasions his rubbish was in the wrong bin, the 55-year-old installed CCTV to see what was going on – catching out the unsuspecting binman.

Serco, which manages waste collection services on behalf of Sandwell Council, said the man's actions were unacceptable and apologised.

Binmen can refuse to collect rubbish if it is not sorted into the correct bins and it is believed the worker was mixing the rubbish to try and take a shortcut on his rounds.

In the footage, the man, wearing a woolly hat and high-vis trousers, can be clearly seen moving the rubbish outside the house on All Saints Way before walking off.

IT worker Mr Dhande said: "I was shocked. All along I was under the impression it was children messing about but it is a grown man, who looks like an employee. This is what people pay their taxes for – for them to do their job."

The footage was captured shortly before 5.30am last Tuesday. Mr Dhande said the problems with his bins had partly prompted his decision to install CCTV.

The CCTV image of the binman caught on camera with the bins

Paedophile, 101, loses appeal

A 101-YEAR-OLD paedophile, thought to be the oldest person ever to be convicted in British legal history, has lost an appeal against his prison sentence.

Ralph Clarke, of Holly Lane, Erdington, was jailed for 13 years for child abuse at the city's crown court in December. The former RAF man and HGV driver had been found guilty of 21 sex offences and admitted nine others.

But he appealed to top judges, claiming his 'extreme old age' should have resulted in a considerably shorter sentence. But senior judges at the Court of Appeal in London upheld the 13-year stretch.

Lady Justice Hallett said there are facilities in jails for old inmates. Although Clarke has health difficulties, he was living independently prior to his sentencing and travelled to court on public transport each day unaided.

"We are not persuaded that the sentence passed was manifestly excessive," she concluded.

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Students impress at college gaming expo

STUDENTS impressed judges at a recent annual college gaming exhibition.

First year level three IT and Games Development students wowed judges from local gaming company InTouch at the Halesowen College Annual Gaming Expo.

Judges included lead developer Steven Baker and lead artist Craig Herbert, who are both from the rapidly growing West Midlands company and were impressed with the originality, plot and game play of the learners' final production.

Talent

Mr Baker said: "We have seen really rich talent and everyone has clearly worked hard towards setting up their final production for this fabulous event. There is clear evidence that these young people are rapidly developing their skills in business project management skills."

He added: "These skills alongside their technical skills shows a high standard of industry readiness."

Taxi drivers make cameras plea after series of attacks

TAXIS in Dudley borough must be fitted with CCTV to help protect drivers after a spate of attacks, taxi bosses insist.

Cab drivers in Dudley are expected to find out next month if they will be allowed to put cameras in Hackney Carriage and private hire vehicles.

The head of Dudley's taxi association said the move is necessary if drivers are to feel safe doing their jobs and has pleaded with councillors to give the move the green light.

Dudley Private Hire and Taxi Association has been calling for CCTV for more than a year. Having cameras would be optional for drivers, who would have to pay for them out of their own pocket.

But after several attacks on drivers in recent months, many believe the cameras are necessary.

Association chairman Shaz Saleem said: "This is to protect drivers. At the moment, with these attacks, it would make drivers feel a lot more secure.

"Taxi drivers are easy targets. They are like banks on wheels and need a lot more protection."

Mr Saleem declared 'enough was enough' after two attacks on taxi drivers earlier this year.

A taxi driver was knifed by a passenger at the BP Petrol Station in Pedmore Road, Lye, in March.

Punched

That came just weeks after driver Sheakh Arbaz suffered a horrific assault in Dudley. His two passengers punched him repeatedly as he sat in the driver's seat waiting to be paid his fare, taking his earnings and car keys.

Last year two drivers were the victim of terrifying incidents in Halesowen when a passenger held a syringe to their necks that he claimed was 'infected with Aids'.

Taxi drivers have been victims of various attacks more than 3,000 times in the West Midlands over the last decade.

Mr Saleem said drivers need to feel safe. He added: "The man who attacked the driver (in Lye) was caught on CCTV at a petrol station.

"If there was CCTV in the car it could have been taken to the police and dealt with a lot quicker.

"We are hoping this will be approved by councillors."

The issue is due to be discussed by Dudley Council's taxis committee in May.

Eggs-ellent home visit

Schoolboy Jake Pearson with residents Lilly Cox, left, and Doris Hobday

EASTER arrived early for residents at an assisted-living day centre when they were given chocolate eggs by school children.

Pupils from Summerhill Primary School in Tipton travelled with staff to Walker Grange, also in Tipton, to hand out the treats. The initiative formed part of a project between the school and day centre where children have been learning about the impact of dementia.

The project has been set up by Home Instead Senior Care, a domiciliary care company, in partnership with the school and day centre.

Business development manager Susan Love, said the visit was a follow-up to a previous event when she visited the school and spoke to pupils about living with dementia.

She said: "The project has been absolutely great, it helps children to understand how people living with dementia can be helped."

A total of 42 Easter eggs were handed out, along with an Easter card, which was signed by members of the school's council, which is made up of 24 pupils.

Pupil Jake Pearson, nine, helped hand out eggs to residents, including twins Lilly Cox and Doris Hobday, 92.

Towpath revamp gets £200k to encourage walks

A CANAL towpath will get a £200,000 revamp after councillors agreed to release the funds to help attract high quality housing.

Wolverhampton Council agreed unanimously to releasing £206,000 to the Canal and River Trust to enhance the waterway and wildlife close to where 480 homes are to be built in Bilston. The plans form part of the multi-million pound Bilston Urban Village plan.

The existing towpath is not surfaced and often muddy in wet weather.

But the works will see the path at Deepfields Junction towards Highfields Road widened and given a more durable surface. Once finished, the path will drain much better.

It will also link with existing cycling and walking routes, which city council bosses hope will encourage residents to take up a more active lifestyle. For future occupants of the urban village, it will provide an alternative route to work, school or shops.

The funds were discussed at Wolverhampton's full council meeting on Wednesday night. Councillor John Reynolds, cabinet member for city economy, described the work as 'good news'.

New season of musicals and dance at Alex

A NEW season of West End musicals, stand-up comedy, live music and drama has been announced at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre.

Following a sold-out season in 2015, the smash-hit Broadway and West End musical Jersey Boys returns to the city centre theatre in December as part of a nationwide tour.

Craig Revel Horwood will direct and choreograph a new musical featuring the greatest hits of Dusty Springfield. Son of a Preacher Man visits the Station Street venue from September 12 to 16.

Strictly Come Dancing favourites Vincent Simone and Flavia Cacace return to the Alex with their latest sizzling production, Tango Moderno from September 19 to 23. Fans of Monty Python and The Holy Grail are in for a treat when the musical comedy Spamalot from October 3 to 7.

Cilla The Musical, charting the rise to stardom of the Liverpool lass who became one of Britain's top entertainer, visits from October 10 to 14.

To book tickets, call 0844 871 3011 or visit www.atgtickets.com/birmingham website.

Growing business is dearly a favourite with its customers

Claire Stockley (Sales) and Dan Butcher (Business)

Commercial feature

MARKET leading Stourbridge double glazing business Carera Windows has fitted more than half a million quality windows and doors over the past 28 years.

The company based in Junction Road, Audnam, started out 28 years ago to serve the Stourbridge area but as it has grown it has moved on to serve neighbouring areas including Halesowen, Kidderminster, Bromsgrove and Worcester.

The business moved to its present base 20 years ago. Carera offer a full range of windows and doors and also install a full range of conservatories, orangeries and living spaces.

Attractive doors and windows complement the room setting

Happy

The company prides itself on having a depth of knowledge in all aspects of the products it offers and industry regulations. The company is fully conversant with all current regulations within the industry. A key aim is to provide a level of customer service that is second to none.

More than 70 per cent of all Carera Windows' home sales come via personal recommendation from happy clients, which number many thousands. It takes pride in completing every project to the highest standard.

From the start, Carera is committed to offering only top-quality products, expert installations and unbeatable personal service to both private and commercial customers. Its experienced team is committed to working closely with local authorities, education authorities, landlords, architects and contractors on its commercial work. Carera Windows is keen to get involved in any kind of commercial project from industrial units to office conversions, new build to refurbishments and renovations.

The company's showroom at its base is open Monday to Friday. 9am to 5pm and Saturday, 10am to 4pm. It offers a wide range of products in various sizes and colours, manufactured using PVCu, aluminium, GRP and hardwood. Carera also installs entrance doors ,sliding patio doors , french double doors and porches

Carera Windows was started by owner and managing director Mark Crumpton in 1989, originally from home as a small enterprising double glazing company supplying the local area. Its housing association glazing contracts and commercial premises work now also takes the business across the country.

Carera prides itself on offering honest and professional expert advice, installing 100 per cent high quality products, sensible prices and outstanding customer service.

It has become a market leader in its area and aims to provide a friendly service without hard sell.

Carera can supply and fit from a single window to complex orangeries and no job is to small or to large for it. The company controls every aspect of its projects.

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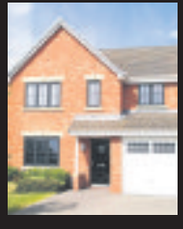

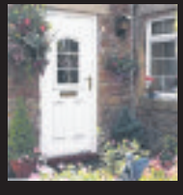

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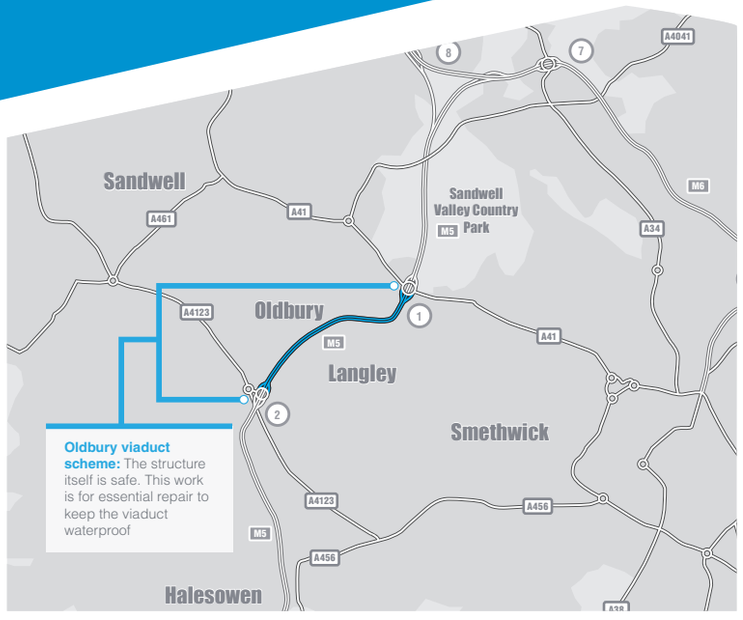

After Easter, Highways England will be starting a major concrete repair and waterproofing scheme on the M5 Oldbury Viaduct between junctions 1 and 2.

The structure of the viaduct is safe but intervention is required now to repair the damaged sections in order to prevent bigger challenges and further disruption in the future. Once complete, customers will benefit from a safer and more resilient route.

To keep this vital route open we will be using different phases of traffic management starting with a reduction to 3 narrow lanes and 40mph speed limit between junctions 1 and 2. We will do everything possible to plan and manage our roadworks to keep traffic moving. However there will be some disruption to the M5 and routes leading into and out of these junctions.

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We'll put the 'pop' back in pop music

Want to feel old? It's been 20 years since Steps released their disco-tastic debut – and now they're back to celebrate. And despite the two decades in between, The Ticket discovers not much has really changed.

Step this way – Lisa, H, Lee, Claire and Faye have reformed

Hit 90s pop group Steps are playing a game. Lisa Scott-Lee and Claire Richards are trying to work out who the Chancellor of the Exchequer was when they formed, almost 20 years ago, in May 1997.

As they confer, a giggling Ian 'H' Watkins, sat behind the pair, slyly tickles their backs. Swatting him away, Claire correctly answers 'Gordon Brown' to the delight of her bandmates, who fall about laughing after H's antics are revealed.

It's just one sign of the affinity and energy retained by the group, who split so acrimoniously at the turn of the millennium, when Claire and H decided they wanted to form a duo.

Since then, of course, things have been patched up, and the band reformed in 2011 for a Sky Living series and a string of concerts. Now, more than five years on, with the exception of 39-year-old Claire, they have all celebrated their 40th birthdays, but that does little to deter their energy and positive affront.

Hauling suitcases and carrying Pret takeaway bags, they bundle into the studio where they're set to have a photo shoot. The five, completed by Lee Latchford-Evans and Faye Tozer, start swapping make-up and hairbrushes and finding plug sockets to charge their phones, giggling and breaking into song before finally taking their seats.

The Ticket catches up with them 24 hours later, after the release of Scared Of The Dark, the lead track from their first album proper in 17 years (they released a Christmas record of largely covers in 2012), and the fivesome have somehow grown even more excitable.

Taking over the corner of a restaurant in a London hotel, their manager, Adam, looking at his laptop, says, "We're on Vice". The comment is greeted with startled yelps – along with an inquisitive query: "Is that good?!"

BOMBASTIC

The Vice article declares Scared Of The Dark a 'bombastic, ABBA-referencing pop beast that will most certainly soundtrack someone's post-divorce drinking this year', declaring it 'banger of the month'.

This reaction has come as a complete surprise, says Lee, flanked by mum-of-two Claire, who arrives a little later than her band mates after completing the school run.

"We didn't know how people were going to take it," confesses Lee. "We know fans love the old stuff, it's been proven. But the new material, we thought, 'Oh God, we're from 20 years ago, the charts have changed, how they buy it has changed, how it charts. . . .'."

But all that doesn't seem to have mattered. The group recall leaving the BBC in Salford after an interview a day or two before, when staff members lined the glass corridors to catch a glimpse of Steps passing through.

Claire recalls: "There were loads of people asking for photos and autographs, and security told us they had never seen anything like it. They've had Bradley Cooper, Will.i.am and all these really amazing famous people in there, and they said this never happens.

"I don't actually know what is going on!" she adds, laughing.

Although they still aren't quite sure how the charts work (they repeatedly ask about the difference between streaming and buying), they take great delight in following Scared Of The Dark's climb on the iTunes Store, and admit they've been sharing positions and updates via their WhatsApp group.

They listened to the song's first play on the radio in the car together – almost 20 years to the day after they gathered to hear their debut release, the now iconic 5, 6, 7, 8.

"It felt like we had started all over again," reflects H. "There were tears, and shivers and camaraderie and love, and it was so amazing. We were together for 5, 6, 7, 8 listening in a van. It feels like deja vu."

Their WhatsApp group is also what supported the band's relaunch. With all five scattered around the globe now, it meant they could all receive instructions to post the same updates from their social media accounts at the same time.

"I was in Dubai, Faye was in Mexico, H was in Wales, the other two were in London. We were all over the world waiting, pouncing with our phones pressing send," explains Lee.

"It was like, 'Thunderbirds are go!'" H chips in. "It was so exciting."

Probed on why now was right for the band's third coming, the five are adamant it isn't purely a gimmicky return to mark 20 years, but that they want to 'inject pop back into pop music'.

"New music the key for us to have a new energy with Steps," says Faye, "because we couldn't have asked the fans to come and see us again with just the old songs. We were so ready to give them something and I think it has breathed new life into us."

They promise the new record, Tears On The Dancefloor, despite its name, will add some colour and light relief to a 'grey world'.

"I think the world needs a bit of light-hearted fun," says Lee, "Steps always brought that. We've got upbeat music, we like having a great time, we just want the audience to join in with us, forget their worries for a while and just have a bit fun, and that's what we want to bring back."

> *There were tears, and shivers and camaraderie and love, it was amazing*

And the album wasn't thrown together, he insists, but was two years in the making, and the band listened to around 50 tracks before settling on the final tracklist.

"We are really protective of us," explains Claire. "Protective of Steps.

"It is ours, it is our legacy and we're always very cautious about doing something that might damage that."

It's clear, behind all the jokes and buoyancy, this is a group who really want this comeback to succeed.

"Do you not think though that music, and fashion, have a 20-year cycle," Faye reasons.

After a pause, an unsure Watkins asks: "Does that mean we'll do this again when we're 60?"

"Oh God, that scares me!" Tozer replies – but perhaps don't bet against it.

● Tears On The Dancefloor is out on April 21 while tickets to the Steps UK tour, Party On The Dancefloor, are on sale now. Visit www.stepsofficial.co.uk. Steps play Barclaycard Arena on December 1.

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The

The Stand Up And Rock crew

Jasper is ready to Stand Up and Rock again

After 25 years of stand-up, Jasper Carrott decided he was done with live comedy. Until the Stand Up and Rock Tour with former ELO drummer Bev Bevan came about.

During his career, spanning more than 40 years, proud Brummie Jasper has starred in numerous TV programmes, written books and even reached number five in the UK charts in 1975 with Funky Moped, produced by ELO's Jeff Lynne. It sold more than half a million copies.

Jasper, pictured with Bev and his other Stand Up and Rock co-stars, was granted the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2008 British Comedy Awards. He first began doing shows at folk clubs across the Midlands, with Brummie Jasper hailing the Black Country as a 'great place to work'. Well, he's back in the Black Country to perform at Dudley Town Hall on Friday and Saturday, April 20 and 21.

"The reason we're doing so many shows in the Black Country is because of the wonderful audiences," says Jasper, now aged 71.

"When I was starting out in my career, going through the folk clubs, I loved it in the Black Country.

"There were dozens of these folk clubs across the area back then, in Codsall, Tettenhall, Dudley, Kingswinford. I always had such a good time.

"Dudley Town Hall, for example. It's always somewhere I really look forward to performing."

Back in 2000 the star stopped doing stand-up, but it was the Stand Up And Rock tour back in 2014 which rekindled his love for live comedy.

"It started off a few years back with Bev, who I've been mates with for 60 years. We realised there was a whole audience not being catered for, those aged 50 and above.

"By the time I hit the road I'll be 72," he says. "Ken Dodd's 87 and he's still doing it. That gives me some hope."

The line-up includes drummer Bev Bevan (ELO, The Move) and singer Geoff Turton (The Rockin' Berries) plus Phil Tree, Tony Kelsey, Abby Brant and newcomer Suzi Woo. See www.dudley.gov.uk/entertainment or call (01384) 812 812.

Kinks musical will really get you

SUNNY Afternoon the Olivier Award-winning West End hit featuring the music of Ray Davies and The Kinks, visits Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, April 18 to 22.

The tour stars Ryan O'Donnell as Ray Davies (pictured) with Mark Newnham as his battling brother Dave, Garmon Rhys as bassist Pete Quaife and Andrew Gallo as drummer Mick Avory

The Kinks exploded onto the 60s music scene with a raw energetic new sound that rocked a nation. But one of the era's most iconic British bands experienced a tumultuous time of euphoric highs and agonising lows, leaving a musical legacy that influenced later generations, from You Really Got Me, via Waterloo Sunset to Lola.

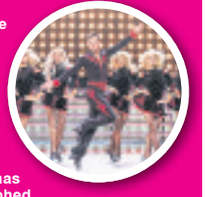
The acclaimed show won four accolades at the 2015 Olivier Awards including Best New Musical and Outstanding Achievement in Music for Ray Davies. Following a sell-out run at Hampstead Theatre, Sunny Afternoon opened to critical acclaim at the Harold Pinter Theatre in London's West End in October 2014 and had its final London performance two years later.

Sunny Afternoon has music and lyrics by Ray Davies with a book by Joe Penhall from an original story by Ray Davies. Contact grandtheatre.co.uk or call 01902 429212.

Meanwhile, On April 21, Ray Davies will release his first new album in more than nine years, Americana, via Legacy Recordings. The 15-track collection of originals serves as a master-crafted return for one of the most highly-rated songwriters of the past 50 years, and follows Davies' 2013 memoir of the same name.

Using the book as both source material and catalyst, Davies enlisted The Jayhawks as his backing band and recorded the album at Konk, the London studio founded by The Kinks in 1973.

A new Lord of the Dance



More than 40 of the finest young dancers will feature in Michael Flatley's spectacular Lord of the Dance: Dangerous Games at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, from Wednesday to Sunday, April 19 to 23.

Though he no longer appears, the production has been created, choreographed and directed by Irish dance superstar Flatley. This UK tour will star his protégés James Keegan, Morgan Comer and Mathew Smith as Lord of the Dance. See www.thsh.co.uk or call 0121 780 3333.

Band ready to make another Splashh

Indie rock band Splashh release their second album, Waiting A Lifetime, tomorrow (Friday) and have a gig at Birmingham venue the Hare and Hounds on Thursday, April 20.

After a brief relocation to New York, the London-based Anglo-Aussie outfit recorded Waiting A Lifetime in Brooklyn with producer Nicolas Vernhes (War on Drugs, Deerhunter, Animal Collective). Featuring bassist Tom Beal, formerly of Wolverhampton band Ripchord, the new album is sometimes more raucous than their slacker-rock debut, Comfort, five years ago.

Splashh was formed in 2012 by Sasha Carlson and Toto Vivian, friends from suburban Australia. The line-up is completed by Beal and Jaie Gonzales.

They will be supported by The Americas and Phones at the Kings Heath venue. Tickets £8 in advance.

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SATURDAY'S TV APRIL 15

CHOICE

Peter Capaldi & Pearl Mackie

Doctor Who (BBC1, 7.20pm)

New series. Peter Capaldi's eccentric, era-hopping Time Lord returns for his final series. However, before he hands over the key to the Tardis to his as-yet-undecided successor, there's the matter of the girl with a star in her eye to deal with. A chance encounter brings Bill Potts into contact with the Doctor, who is conducting a secret mission on Earth. What follows is a terrifying chase across time and space, one that opens Bill's mind to the prospect of a bigger and wider universe than she'd ever imagined. Pearl Mackie makes her debut Doctor Who appearance as new companion Bill, while Matt Lucas also stars as the Doctor's old ally Nardole.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry's Absolute Favourites. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The afternoon session on day one at the Crucible Theatre. **4.30** Final Score. **5.30** Who Dares Wins.

6.10 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present as famous faces take part in the general knowledge quiz in which they try to come up with the least likely correct answers to a series of questions posed to members of the public.

7.20 Doctor Who. New series. Peter Capaldi returns, as a secret mission brings the Time Lord and his sardonic assistant Nardole into contact with a girl with a star in her eye. With Pearl Mackie.

8.10 Casualty. A man turns to arson to bring justice to a bullying boss, unaware that he has placed his own wife in mortal danger. Meanwhile, Jez finds himself in bed with Elle's 17-year-old son.

9.00 All Round to Mrs Brown's. Agnes Brown and her brood are joined in their studio-home by another selection of famous faces, including comedian and presenter Sue Perkins and Diversity's Ashley Banjo, who brings his mum Danielle to meet the formidable Irish matriarch. Former Silent Witness star Emilia Fox, most recently seen trying to solve the mystery of The Missing Crown Jewels in Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway, becomes the latest unsuspecting star to join Dermot and Buster on their Celebrity Tour venture, and Aston Merrygold – whose latest single Show Me was released last month – provides this week's music.

10.00 BBC News; Weather.; National Lottery Update.

10.20 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, which include Southampton v Manchester City.

11.45 Film: Rescue Dawn. (2006) Werner Herzog's Vietnam War drama, starring Christian Bale and Steve Zahn.

1.45 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.50** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 Film: Up Periscope. (1959) **7.55 Film:** The Heroes of Telemark. (1965) **10.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. **12.00** Track Cycling World Championships. Live coverage day four at Hong Kong Velodrome. **3.30** Gardeners' World. (R) **4.30** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The afternoon session on day one at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield. **5.30** Nature's Weirdest Events. (R) **5.45** Easter from King's 2017.

7.00 Live Snooker: The World Championship. Coverage of the concluding session on the opening day of the ranking tournament at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, where the first-round matches featuring Mark Selby and Anthony McGill reach a conclusion. Selby is given the honour of being involved in the first fixture of the tournament in his role as reigning champion, but will be well aware that several winners have fallen at the first hurdle the following year, as the unique pressure of defending the title in the intimate surroundings of the Crucible have their effect.

8.00 Grand Tours of Scotland. Paul Murton travels from Loch Tay in Perthshire to the spa town of Strathpeffer, via the Rannoch Moor wilderness and the mountain of Buachaille Etive Mor.

8.30 Dad's Army. Classic comedy, starring Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier. (R)

9.00 QI XL.

9.45 Film: War of the Worlds. (2005) A divorced father's rare weekend with his two estranged children descends into horror when alien war machines rise from beneath Earth and begin to systematically destroy every human being in their path – leaving the man with the dangerous task of getting his kids to safety. Steven Spielberg's sci-fi thriller, based on HG Wells' novel, with Tom Cruise, Dakota Fanning, Justin Chatwin, Miranda Otto and Tim Robbins.

11.35 Snooker: The World Championship. Jason Mohammad presents highlights of the evening session on the opening day at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, where two first-round matches were scheduled to conclude.

12.25 Snooker: World Championship Extra. **2.25** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Oddbods. (R) **7.05** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: NinjaGo: Masters of Spinjitzu. (R) **8.20** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.45** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Weekend. **10.25** James Martin's French Adventure. (R) **11.25** ITV News; Weather. **11.35 Film:** The Flintstones. (1994) **1.20 Film:** The Secret of My Success. (1987) Comedy, starring Michael J Fox. **3.30** Tipping Point. (R) **4.30** Fantastic Beasts and JK Rowling's Wizarding World. (R) **5.30** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.45** ITV News; Weather.

6.00 Operation Magic. Illusionist and Britain's Got Talent 2016 winner Richard Jones performs a special magic show for his former comrades-in-arms in the Army.

7.00 Take Me Out. New series. A model, a circus performer, a football coach and a salesman try to get the female participants to keep their lights on.

8.00 Britain's Got Talent. New series. The nationwide talent search, which gives members of the public a chance to show off their remarkable signature skills, returns for an 11th series. As ever, Ant and Dec take on hosting duties, heading backstage to chat with the scores of auditionees queuing up for their chance at stardom, while Alesha Dixon and David Walliams come back for their sixth year on the judging panel alongside veterans Simon Cowell and Amanda Holden. Even at this early stage, reports from the audition recording stages indicate that some of the acts have made a strong impression on the judges – but whether that will work in their favour remains to be seen.

9.25 Film: The Expendables. (2010) Action thriller, directed by and starring Sylvester Stallone. With Jason Statham.

10.25 ITV News; Weather.

10.40 Film: The Expendables. (2010) Continued.

11.40 The Chase. (R)

12.30 Jackpot247.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 Triathlon: Super League Triathlon. **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.55** The Simpsons. (R) **11.25** The Simpsons. (R) **11.50** The Simpsons. (R) **12.20** Extreme Food. **12.55** Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix Practice 3 Live. Coverage from the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir. **2.25** F1 Meets Murray Walker. **2.55** Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix Qualifying Live. From the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir (Start-time 4.00pm). **5.30** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Naples. (R)

6.00 Channel 4 News.

6.30 Film: The Book Thief. (2013) Premiere. A girl separated from her family is raised by foster parents in Nazi Germany, who instill in her a love of reading. She is horrified by the book burnings and tries to save volumes from the flames, while she and her adoptive family provide a safe hiding place for a Jewish boy. Drama based on Markus Zusak's novel, starring Sophie Nelisse, Geoffrey Rush and Emily Watson.

9.00 Film: The Imitation Game. (2014) Biopic of mathematician Alan Turing, whose work during the Second World War translated seemingly unbreakable Nazi codes as well as pioneering the development of computer technology. In the years following the war, his life would be destroyed as his homosexuality was discovered, leaving him facing criminal charges. Starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Keira Knightley and Charles Dance.

11.15 Film: Solomon Kane. (2010) A 17th-century mercenary fights to redeem himself for his past sins by rescuing a kidnapped girl from an evil sorcerer. Fantasy thriller, with James Purefoy and Pete Postlethwaite.

1.05 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. Arizona bistro owners who have a contempt for customer feedback. (R) **1.55** Hollyoaks. Omnibus. Liam's fury with Grace grows and he has a plan for those closest to her. (R) **4.00** Phil Spencer: Secret Agent. From Reigate in Surrey. (R) **4.50** Four in a Bed. (R) **5.15** Location, Location, Location. House-hunting in west London. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.30** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.15** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.40** Police Interceptors Unleashed. (R) **12.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.10** Bargain Bride on Benefits. (R) **2.10** On Benefits: Life on the Dole. (R) **3.15** On Benefits: Life on the Dole. (R) **4.15** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **5.15** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R)

6.10 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. The agents have an explosive run-in with a debtor as they try to retrieve £1,800 owed by a car dealership, and in Derbyshire, two officers try to collect more than £1,500 in unpaid parking fines. Elsewhere, Max and Paul are in London as they attempt to recover £2,000 owed by a property company, but an employee refuses to let them enter. (R)

7.10 NCIS: Los Angeles. Part two of two. Kensi goes in search of her father's killer, before bumping into her mother, who she has not seen for more than 15 years.

8.00 NCIS. The team looks into a raid on a naval base, and Dr Cyril Taft – the surgeon who saved Gibbs' life – experiences the thrill of assisting on an investigation. Assigned to treat Gibbs' suspect, Taft manages to uncover evidence that may prove crucial to solving the case. Meanwhile, DiNozzo pays his old flame Jeanne Benoit a visit as he chases a lead involving doctors in Sudan. Guest starring John Cryer.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Most Shocking Celebrity Moments: The 00s. A look back at the noughties, which witnessed the birth of reality TV and some bizarre scenes caught on camera – from George Galloway's turn as a cat in Celebrity Big Brother, to Katie Price and Peter Andre's love affair and Gillian McKeith's fit of the vapours on I'm a Celebrity. It was also the decade that saw Susan Boyle shock the judges on Britain's Got Talent, Miley Cyrus cause a storm at the VMAs, Robbie Williams rejoin Take That, and Kate Moss dabble with cocaine. There are also reflections on incidents involving Tiger Woods, Lance Armstrong and Wayne Rooney. (R)

11.55 Access.

12.00 SuperCasino. **3.10 Film:** Knock Off. (1998) **4.50** House Doctor. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 The Silk Road **8.00** Tankies: Tank Heroes of WWII **9.00 Film:** Department Q: The Absent One (2014) **10.55** Top of the Pops: 1983 **12.05** Chas & Dave: Last Orders **1.05** London Songs at the BBC **2.05** Squeeze: Take Me I'm Yours **3.05** Sounds of the Eighties **3.35** Close

ITV2

11.05 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **12.35** Britain's Got Talent: Top 10 Daredevils **1.40** Grease: Live **4.40 Film:** Happy Feet (2006) **5.40** FYI Daily **5.45 Film:** Happy Feet (2006) **6.45 Film:** Bean (1997) **7.45** FYI Daily **7.50 Film:** Bean (1997) **8.30** Scorpion **9.25** Britain's Got More Talent **10.30** Celebrity Juice **11.20** Family Guy **12.45** American Dad! **1.45** Through the Keyhole **2.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.55** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3

11.30 Film: Holiday on the Buses (1973) **12.30** FYI Daily **12.35 Film:** Holiday on the Buses (1973) **1.15 Film:** Carry On Abroad (1972) **2.15** FYI Daily **2.20 Film:** Carry On Abroad (1972) **3.05 Film:** Carry On Doctor (1967) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10 Film:** Carry On Doctor (1967) **5.05 Film:** Carry On Behind (1975) **6.05** FYI Daily **6.10 Film:** Carry On Behind (1975) **7.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis

ITV4

11.00 Pawn Stars **1.30** ITV Racing Live from Musselburgh and Haydock Park. Coverage of today's race meetings at Musselburgh and Haydock Park. **4.00 Film:** The Land That Time Forgot (1975) **5.00** FYI Daily **5.05 Film:** The Land That Time Forgot (1975) **5.50** It's Not Rocket Science **6.55** Fierce **7.55** River Monsters **9.00 Film:** Clear and Present Danger (1994) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** Clear and Present Danger (1994) **11.50 Film:** Awake (2007) **12.55** FYI Daily **1.00 Film:** Awake (2007) **1.35** Fifth Gear **2.25** Hogan's Heroes

E4

12.30 The Goldbergs **3.00 Film:** Evolution (2001) **5.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** Taken 2 (2012) **10.50** Gogglebox **12.50** Celebrity First Dates **1.50** Naked Attraction **2.50** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **3.35** Gogglebox

Film4

11.00 Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2010) **1.00** Home Alone (1990) **3.10** Stuart Little (1999) **4.50** Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs (2009) **6.45** The River Wild (1994) **9.00** X-Men: First Class (2011) **11.35** The Windmill Massacre (2016) **1.15** Resident Evil: Apocalypse (2004) **3.25** Close

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SUNDAY'S TV APRIL 16

CHOICE

Rowan Atkinson

Maigret's Night at the Crossroads
(ITV, 8.00pm)
The detective interrogates a mysterious Dane who has been caught with the dead body of a diamond dealer in his car, and who proves entirely resistant to his questioning. Maigret is convinced his suspect's sister may know something, but soon discovers that everyone in the small rural town where they live is hiding something. Guest starring Tom Wlaschiha (Game of Thrones) and Kevin McNally (the Pirates of the Caribbean movies). With Rowan Atkinson, Lucy Cohu, Shaun Dingwall, Mark Heap, Leo Staar, Aidan McArdle, Mia Jexen, Stephen Wright, Robin Weaver, Ben Caplan, Catherine Kanter and Paul Chahidi.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** BBC News. **10.00** Easter Day Service – Live from Hereford Cathedral. **11.00** Urbi et Orbi. **11.25** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.15** BBC News; Weather. **1.30** Regional Programme. **2.15 Film:** Cool Runnings. (1993) Fact-based sporting comedy, starring John Candy. **3.50** Spring: Earth's Seasonal Secrets. **4.50** Lifeline. **5.00** Songs of Praise. **5.35** Galapagos. (R)

6.35 BBC News.

6.50 Regional Programme.

7.00 Countryfile. Matt Baker takes part in a pace egg rolling challenge in Lancashire and meets an artist who decorates eggs for a living, while Anita Rani follows a walk through the region's hills set up to commemorate the witch trials that occurred 400 years ago. Steve Brown visits Brockholes nature reserve in the hope of seeing boxing hares, Adam Henson goes shopping for pigs, and Tom Heap reports on an MRSA outbreak in Denmark. Including weather for the week ahead.

8.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce returns for a second episode from Pembroke Castle in West Wales. Items brought in to be valued include a sapphire ring that changes colour in different light, a papal hat that once belonged to Pope Pius XII, and a collection of Anglo-Indian paintings from 1780 that were once used to decorate a village's scout hut.

9.00 Line of Duty. The AC-12 investigation intensifies in light of recent developments, and new forensic anomalies lead the detectives to a major breakthrough. Meanwhile, Nick Huntley comes under scrutiny.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman presents highlights of the day's Premier League action, featuring West Bromwich Albion v Liverpool.

11.30 I'm Different: Let Me Drive. An autistic driver passes his test, but finds his parents do not want him to drive on his own, so takes a pass plus test. Another learner tries to keep her twitches under control.

12.00 Weather for the Week Ahead.
12.05 BBC News.

BBC2

6.30 The Beechgrove Garden. **7.00** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.00** Countryfile. (R) **9.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **10.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Track Cycling World Championships. **2.15** Live Snooker: The World Championship. Coverage of the second session on the second day.

6.00 Inside the Factory: Shoes. Gregg Wallace visits the UK's largest sports shoe factory to see how 3,500 pairs of trainers are made every day, before meeting the man who comes up with the latest designs. Cherry Healey gets hands-on in a tannery, helping to process thousands of rawhides into finished leather for the nation's shoes, and finds out how a ballet company painstakingly create 250,000 ballet shoes per year. Ruth Goodman reveals how, when the sewing machine was first introduced into shoe factories in the mid-19th century, traditional shoemakers went on strike to rebel against joining a restrictive production line. (R)

7.00 Robot Wars. Dara O Briain and Angela Scanlon present the grand final between robots Aftershock, Eruption, Ironside 3, Concussion, Carbide and an unconfirmed wild card. Last in the series.

8.00 Top Gear. Chris and Rory take a road trip across Cuba, Matt LeBlanc test drives the Mercedes-AMG GT R, and Ross Noble is this week's Star in a Reasonably Fast Car.

9.00 Colombia with Simon Reeve. The presenter explores the country as 50 years of civil war draws to a close, meeting farmers in need of government support and guerrilla fighters who have pledged to lay down arms.

10.00 Film: At Any Price. (2012) Premiere. A farmer and his rebellious race driver son are forced to pull together as the family business comes under a series of threats. Drama, starring Dennis Quaid and Zac Efron.

11.40 Snooker: The World Championship. Jason Mohammad introduces the evening session on day two at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, which featured two matches in the first round, involving Marco Fu and Mark Allen.

12.30 Snooker: World Championship Extra. **2.30** Countryfile. (R)

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Oddbods. (R) **7.05** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: NinjaGo: Masters of Spinjitzu. (R) **8.20** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! **8.45** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Weekend. **10.20** Judge Rinder. (R) **11.25** Wild Australia with Ray Mears. (R) **11.50** ITV News; Weather. **12.00 Film:** Thunderball. (1965) **2.35** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **4.00** Little Big Shots. (R) **5.00** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.15** ITV News; Weather. **5.30** Harry Hill's Alien Fun Capsule. (R)

6.00 The Voice: The Winner's Story. A celebration of this year's winner of the talent show, looking back at their appearances in the series and catching up with them in the aftermath of their success in the final.

7.00 Five Gold Rings. Game show, hosted by Phillip Schofield, in which two sisters take on a married couple to answer visual questions by placing rings on an LED floor. Last in the series.

8.00 Maigret's Night at the Crossroads. The detective interrogates a mysterious Dane who has been caught with a dead body in his car in a rural town – but finds all the locals seem to be hiding something.

10.00 ITV News; Weather.

10.20 Lethal Weapon. As Riggs and Murtaugh examine the murder of one of LA's fashion expeditors, they follow a trail of evidence that leads them to a dangerous underground investigation led by the DEA. (R)

11.10 The Nightly Show Best Bits. Highlights of the seventh week of the entertainment show, with Jason Manford presenting a mix of topical monologues, studio games, celebrity guests, stand-up and video clips.

11.40 Premiership Rugby Union. Action from the 20th round of fixtures, which included Harlequins v Exeter Chiefs, Bristol v Wasps, and Northampton Saints v Saracens.

12.30 Jackpot247. **3.00** The Cube. (R) **3.45** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 The King of Queens. (R) **6.35** The King of Queens. (R) **7.00** The King of Queens. (R) **7.25** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Ice Age: The Great Egg-Scapade. (R) **1.00 Film:** Hop. (2011) Part-animated comedy, starring James Marsden. **2.50** Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix Live Build-Up. Previewing the third round of the season. **3.50** Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix Live. Coverage of the third round of the season (Start-time 4.00pm).

6.15 Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix Live Reaction. Steve Jones presents reaction to the third round of the season, which took place at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir.

6.45 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Kevin McCloud's Escape to the Wild. Kevin travels to Central America to meet British family-of-five the Atkinsons, who have quit London to live a simpler existence in the rainforests of Belize. As he attempts to understand their motivations for the move, he suffers from the heat, is attacked by swarms of biting insects and shares his mud hut with a large scorpion, but begins to appreciate the rewards of a simple jungle life, one in which they've constructed a two-storey building entirely from recycled rubbish. (R)

8.00 Rome's Sunken Secrets. Documentary exploring the underwater ruins of an ancient Roman city located in the Bay of Naples, revealing how the volcanic landscape led to its destruction.

9.00 Homeland. Dar scrambles to get his plan back on track, Saul and Keane deal with some fallout from her interview, and Carrie realises that she and Quinn must act fast. Last in the series.

10.10 Gogglebox. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)

11.05 Film: East Is East. (1999) Two Asian teenagers in 1970s Salford are horrified when their traditionally minded father plans arranged marriages for them. Comedy drama, starring Om Puri and Jimi Mistry.

1.00 Film: Kingpin. (1996) **3.00** Gillette World Sport. **3.30** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **3.55** Kirstie's Fill Your House for Free. (R) **4.10** Four in a Bed. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Pip Ahoy! **6.10** Mr Men. **6.20** Mofy. **6.30** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.35** Paw Patrol. (R) **6.45** Bob the Builder. (R) **7.00** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.10** Olly the Little White Van. **7.20** Little Princess. (R) **7.35** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.05** Blaze and the Monster Machines. **8.30** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.45** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.15** Peppa Pig. **9.35** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.45** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.20** Funniest Fails, Falls & Flops. (R) **10.45** Grannies Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **11.45** Playful Pups Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **12.45 Film:** Watership Down. (1978) Animated drama, with the voice of John Hurt. **2.30** Greatest Animated Movies. (R) **5.20 Film:** Oliver! (1968) Musical, starring Ron Moody.

8.00 Naughty Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud. Compilation of internet videos featuring cats doing bizarre and humorous things.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 The Prince Story: Icon, Genius, Slave. Documentary exploring the singer's troubled private life, exploring the emotional turmoil that inspired some of his most famous songs. The programme examines some of the more unusual incidents in his career, including his failed marriage and changing his name to a symbol, as well as the circumstances that led him to die alone.

11.05 Film: Purple Rain. (1984) A talented but arrogant musician with a troubled home life tries to make a name for himself and win the heart of a fellow singer. Musical drama, with Prince and Apollonia Kotero.

1.10 SuperCasino. Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.10** Body of Proof. Part two of two. Megan finds a bomb implanted in Dr Wallace's latest victim and receives a phone call telling her to bring the device to a rendezvous point or Lacey will be killed. (R) **4.00** Criminals: Caught on Camera. The use of CCTV in policing large crowds and bringing rioters to justice. (R) **4.50** House Doctor. A West Midlands home is overhauled. (R) **5.15** Wildlife SOS. The work of an animal sanctuary. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. Virgil gets the blame for breaking a vase. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. Maxi and Roary argue over which of them is faster. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Messiah at the Foundling Hospital **8.00** Darcey Bussell's Looking for Audrey **9.00** Shakespeare's Mother: The Secret Life of a Tudor Woman **10.00** The Killer Wave of 1607 **10.50** The Mystery of Rome's X Tomb **11.50** The Story of Maths **12.50** Cleopatra: A Timewatch Guide **1.50** Pugin: God's Own Architect

ITV2

11.30 Britain's Got Talent **1.00** 2Awesome **1.05** 2Awesome: Guidance **1.35** 2Awesome: Third Wheel **1.55** 2Awesome: LA Story **2.05** 2Awesome: Side Effects **2.35** You've Been Framed! Gold **3.05 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **4.10** FYI Daily **4.15 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **4.50 Film:** Despicable Me 2 (2013) **5.50** FYI Daily **5.55 Film:** Despicable Me 2 (2013) **6.55 Film:** The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2013) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00 Film:** The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2013) **10.00** Family Guy

ITV3

11.40 Film: Mutiny on the Buses (1972) **12.40** FYI Daily **12.45 Film:** Mutiny on the Buses (1972) **1.25 Film:** Carry On Dick (1974) **2.25** FYI Daily **2.30 Film:** Carry On Dick (1974) **3.15 Film:** Carry On Again Doctor (1969) **4.15** FYI Daily **4.20 Film:** Carry On Again Doctor (1969) **5.05 Film:** Carry On Up the Khyber (1968) **6.05** FYI Daily **6.10 Film:** Carry On Up the Khyber (1968) **6.55 Film:** That Riviera Touch (1966) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00 Film:** That Riviera Touch (1966) **9.00** Morecambe and Wise Forever **10.00** It'll Be Alright on the Night **11.00** Lewis

ITV4

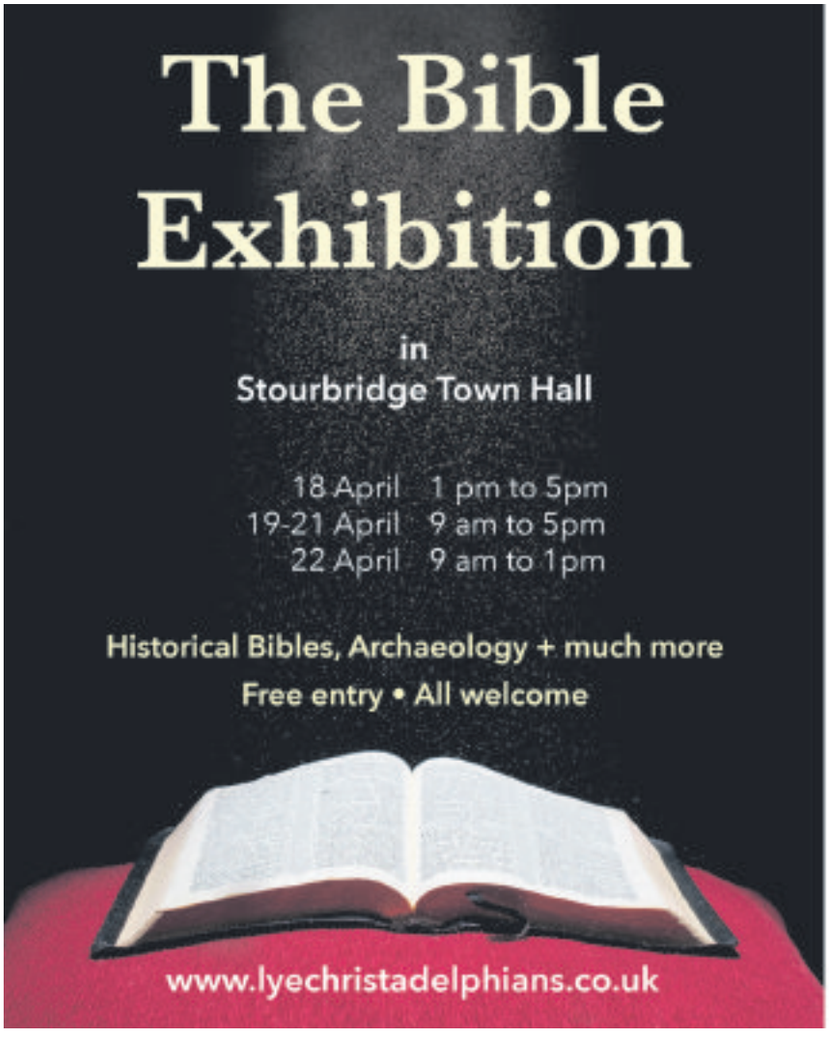
6.15 Football's Greatest: Bobby Charlton **6.35** Pawn Stars **7.00** The Big Fish Off **8.00** Premiership Rugby Union **9.05 Film:** The Dirty Dozen (1967) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** The Dirty Dozen (1967) **12.10 Film:** United 93 (2006) **1.10** FYI Daily **1.15 Film:** United 93 (2006)

E4

11.30 The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Goldbergs **2.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.00 Film:** We Bought a Zoo (2011) **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** Tattoo Fixers **11.00** E4's Tattoo Artist of the Year **12.05** Naked Attraction **1.05** Bizarre ER **2.05** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD

Film4

11.00 Marmaduke (2010) **1.00** Young Sherlock Holmes (1985) **3.15** Stuart Little 2 (2002) **4.50** Ice Age: Continental Drift (2012) **6.35** Mission: Impossible 2 (2000) **9.00** Bridesmaids (2011) **11.25** Sin City: A Dame to Kill For (2014)



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PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, BBC2, 10pm
Bruno, a boy in Nazi Germany, moves to the country when his father is placed in charge of a concentration camp. While exploring the woods close to the facility's boundary, he spots a Jewish youngster being held there, and the two become friends – but Bruno remains innocently oblivious to the camp's true purpose. Drama, starring David Thewlis, Asa Butterfield and Jack Scanlon. (2008)

TUESDAY
A Housekeeper's Revenge, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A student fears for her life after a number of disturbing occurrences, leaving her desperately searching for the culprit. The search leads to her family housemaid – unaware their connection is much deeper than expected. Thriller, starring Chrysti Ane, Lee Broda, Kenton Duty and Doug Haley. (2016)

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, Monday, BBC2, 10pm

WEDNESDAY
Byzantium, Channel 4, 1.35am
Two female vampires spend centuries on the run from an order of their own kind, who object to women becoming undead. They hide out in a seaside town, where one uses a brothel as a means to find men to feed on, while the other forms a bond with a terminally ill boy – but their past soon catches up with them. Horror, starring Gemma Arterton, Saoirse Ronan and Jonny Lee Miller. (2012)

THURSDAY
A Husband's Confession, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A preacher's life is derailed when the son he never knew he had appears in town, just as his wayward teenage niece goes missing. Drama, starring JR Bourne. Edited for daytime broadcast. (2015)

FRIDAY
Dinner for Schmucks, BBC1, 11.50pm
An ambitious executive hopes to win a mean-spirited contest held by his bosses to find the most ridiculous dinner-party guest for everyone to mock. He thinks he has found the perfect winning entry when he meets a dim-witted and socially awkward amateur taxidermist – but has to contend with pretending they are friends. Comedy, with Steve Carell and Paul Rudd. (2010)

Returning series hopes to keep the winning formula

Dubbed 'the sexiest TV drama ever' and the most expensive French TV series made to date, (each show cost twice as much as an episode of Downton Abbey), Versailles arrived on our screens in 2015 with massive expectations.

The period drama raised eyebrows with its gratuitous sex scenes in the first few episodes, but viewers soon became hooked on the intrigue and scandal in Louis XIV's court.

The absolute monarch who built the vast Château de Versailles and set France on a path towards a revolution that would come decades after his death, has been the subject of many mini-series and films over the years.

But French broadcaster Canal+ decided to sidestep the cliché of a powerful old monarch in tights, instead hiring two Hollywood-based British writers, David Wolstencroft and Simon Mirren, and focusing on the king in his 20s, fragile and vulnerable, as he decides to build the palace and move the whole court from Paris.

It's the story of a paranoid young man's image control, his plotting, bed-hopping and his love-hate relationship with his younger brother Philippe, Duke of Orléans, known during Louis's reign as Monsieur.

The first series came to a dramatic finale in late 2015, when the king's sister-in-law Henriette (Noémie Schmidt) – who was also portrayed as his lover – met a painful end after someone poisoned her

Henriette's husband Philippe and the king – played by Alexander Vlahos and George Blagden respectively – could only look on in horror as her throat began to close up.

Tonight, the sumptuous drama returns four years after Henriette's passing, with fresh challenges for the king and his court.

Season two looks at the dark underbelly of power as Louis sees the dream of his grand palace at Versailles crumbling before his eyes.

With phase one complete, most of France's eminent lords and ladies now live under the Sun King's roof.

Drugs, gambling and alcohol are rampant, as nobles begin to poison each other in order to get closer to him.

Blinded by his passion for his mistress, Louis refuses to listen to the advice of the church and his closest advisors and leaves for war against arch-enemy William of Orange, but he must discover the path back to light and redemption to save his vision.

"We have seen this boy-king become this man over 10 hours of season one," explained Blagden.

"And we start season two with him starting to exercise the power he has gained in season one.

"The abuse of that power can distance people from him and he starts to listen to the wrong people and stop listening to the right people."

In the first episode, a coveted vacancy arises, while pregnant Madame de Montespan (Anna Brewster) exercises her influence at every opportunity.

George Blagden stars in Versailles, Friday, BBC2, 9.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
The Walt Disney Story
Channel 5, 4.10pm
Some viewers may remember the days when bank holiday TV wasn't complete without a Disney compilation show, featuring clips from some of the studio's best-loved movies. So, they may feel a little bit nostalgic about this documentary, which looks at how Walt Disney came to make such a huge impact on American culture. Presented by Walt's daughter Diane Disney Miller and narrated by Mary Poppins star Dick Van Dyke, it features interviews with key directors, animators and actors, as well as home movies and, of course, excerpts from the films themselves. However, the documentary also examines some of the more controversial aspect of Disney's legacy, including Walt's testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee and the 1941 strike at the studios.

TUESDAY
Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
Channel 4, 8pm
New series. Some of the UK's most obsessive cleaners head stateside to clean America's mess, with two cleaners staying with their host and immersing themselves in the local culture. In this first episode, obsessive cleaners Tina and Mark fly to Texas to do battle with 70-year-old Patrick's home, spending five days attempting to transform the house which is nestled deep in the Texan countryside. The ranch was once a beautiful family home until Patrick's wife passed away three years ago, since when it has collected clutter, cobwebs and dog poo, and has fallen into a state of disrepair.

WEDNESDAY
Tonight at the London Palladium
ITV, 8pm
Actor, presenter and crooner Bradley Walsh has proved himself to be an all-round entertainer – he had the best-selling debut album in Britain last year – so it's no wonder that after initially flirting with weekly guest presenters, ITV has made him the permanent host of this variety show. The new series kicks off with a typically eclectic line-up, which sees Steps performing their new single for the first time on TV, and a performance by the Chinese State Circus. There's more music from multiple BRIT Award-winner Emeli SandÈ, Phantom of the Opera's Ben Forster, who performs Music of the Night, and all-male acapella group The Techtonics, as well as magic courtesy of Pete Firman. But will Bradley also be persuaded to give us a song?

Born to Kill, Thursday, Channel 4, 9pm

Confessions of a Junior Doctor
Channel 4, 9pm
New series. Filmed at the height of the junior doctors crisis in 2016, this documentary series explores the story of the NHS in unprecedented times, told by some of the 60,000 junior doctors working on the front line in NHS hospitals. Working in every department, from A&E corridors to operating theatres, junior doctors are face increasing pressure as the NHS struggles to cope with the rising number of patients. The first episode follows new graduates as they begin to understand the reality of their new careers.

THURSDAY
Born to Kill
Channel 4, 9pm
New series. Four-part thriller about Sam, a teenager who is on the verge of acting out hidden psychopathic desires. He lives with his protective mum Jenny (Romola Garai), a geriatric nurse, and thinks his dad died in a car crash. On the surface, he appears to be a model teenager. But his mother is protecting him from a dark secret, and when a new girl arrives in town with her single dad, Sam's suppressed desires start to emerge.

FRIDAY
Posh Pawn
Channel 4, 8pm
New series. The return of the programme offering an insight into the world of high-end pawnbroking. James takes a ride around London in an eye-catching supercar, with an aspiring fitness guru who's looking for £80,000. With her eyes on a round-the-world cruise costing £30,000, an adventurous retiree wants to sell a collection of handbags and jewellery. A car enthusiast contacts memorabilia expert Lawrence about a helmet that once belonged to land speed record-breaker Donald Campbell, and James faces a dilemma when he gets an offer for one of his favourite impulse buys.

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1/5	5	Weston Super Mare (more dates)	26/6	5	Babbacombe
8/5	5	Paignton/Torquay (more dates)	3/7	5	Scarborough
15/5	5	Dover/Canterbury	9/7	6	Durham and Northumbria
15/5	5	Eastbourne (more dates)	14/7	5	Falmouth
20/5	5	Great Yarmouth	19/7	5	Llandudno (more dates)
22/5	5	Cornwall (Looe)(more dates)	23/7	7	Scotland Fort William
22/5	6	Highland Railways	31/7	5	North Devon Bideford
29/5	5	Ilfracombe	31/7	5	Isle of Scilly
29/5	5	Snowdonia and Trains	11/8	3	Liverpool and Merseyside
29/5	5	Yorkshire Dales	26/8	6	Ireland The Giants Causeway
5/6	4	Tenby (more dates)	29/9	5	Isle of Man
5/6	5	Bournemouth (more dates)	10/10	8	Channel Islands
5/6	5	Warners Thornsby Hall	2/12	2	Bath Christmas Market
12/6	5	Isle of Wight (more dates)	9/12	3	Thursford Spectacular

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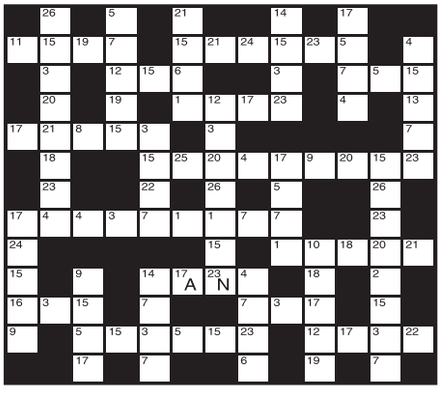
Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



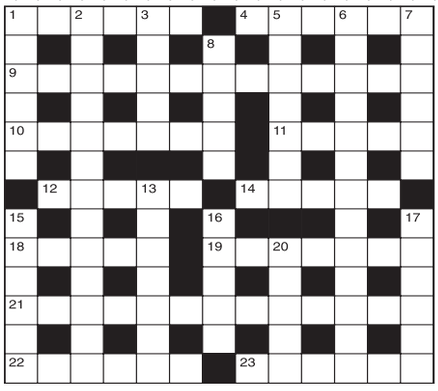
1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17 A
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23 N
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
B	W	F	R	P	L	Q	T	V	S	G	U	I
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
M	J	Y	H	X	K	E	A	D	N	Z	O	C

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Collision causes one politician to do something (6)
4. Slight violence in seeking entry (6)
9. It is used to drive one round the bend! (8,5)
10. Went over because thwarted? (7)
11. Avoid bad duel with egghead (5)
12. Love to make fuss again (5)
14. Prevent from practising as a lawyer? (5)
18. Sharp tasting pastry? (5)
19. Reject deterioration (7)
21. A clearer view of external affairs should result from his work (6,7)
22. Is afraid of adders (6)
23. Where animals may watch the show? (6)

Down

1. Spineless creature in religious body (6)
2. Prevalence can need proper order (13)
3. Players may have them in hand (5)
5. In no place, yet in this place at present (7)
6. Training in fuel in mixed classes (13)
7. Lovers doing a crossword? (6)
8. Pole writes a poem (5)
13. Answer some of the correspondence (7)
15. Boss finally will marry - and be tucked neatly away (6)
16. Cited a decree (5)
17. Lover's suit, perhaps (6)
20. Comb the others found on cockerel's head (5)

Quick Clues:

Across

1. Levy (6)
4. Force (6)
9. Saturation (13)
10. Powerful (7)
11. Lift (5)
12. Love (5)
14. Improper (5)
18. Order (5)
19. Exempt (7)
21. Liable to mishaps (8-5)
22. Join up (6)
23. Stop (6)

Down

1. Hinder (6)
2. Essential bit (4,3,6)
3. Spruce (5)
5. Infested (7)
6. Gem (8,5)
7. Diminish (6)
8. Because (5)
13. Lives (7)
15. Abrade (6)
16. Agency (5)
17. Coming (6)
20. Frolic (5)

Sudoku

		4				1	2	
		9		2	1			6
6			7			4		
		2		7		3	1	
	9		1	6			4	
	5	8		3		2		
		3			5			
2			3			9	7	
	1	6			7			2

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

8	6	3	9	2	4	5	7	1
7	5	1	6	8	3	2	9	4
4	9	2	7	5	1	6	3	8
2	1	5	8	9	6	3	4	7
6	4	9	1	3	7	8	5	2
3	7	8	2	4	5	9	1	6
1	2	4	3	6	9	7	8	5
5	3	6	4	7	8	1	2	9
9	8	7	5	1	2	4	6	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Starting post; 7 Boast; 8 Cargo; 9 Toe; 10 Nerve cell; 11 Nodose; 12 Listen; 15 Seafaring; 17 Gas; 18 Along; 19 Steer; 21 Set an example. Down: 1 Shooting star; 2 Tea; 3 Nature; 4 Picketing; 5 Serve; 6 Rolling stone; 7 Blend; 10 Nostalgia; 13 Tiger; 14 Tissue; 16 Alone; 20 Era.
QUICK - Across: 1 Disconsolate; 7 Sable; 8 Miner; 9 Net; 10 Unconcern; 11 Expose; 12 Strong; 15 Retracted; 17 Awe; 18 Thick; 19 Image; 21 Strengthened.
Down: 1 Disintegrate; 2 Orb; 3 Speech; 4 Laminated; 5 Tense; 6 Transgressed; 7 Set up; 10 Unshackle; 13 Orate; 14 String; 16 Taint; 20 Ash.

Quiz

1. In which country is the Firth of Thames?
2. Who is the godfather of Marina Mowatt?
3. Of which bird family is the quail the smallest species?
4. The US Medal of Honor depicts which goddess?
5. Which composer did Clara Wieck marry in 1840?
6. What is the English name for the Dutch port Vlissingen?
7. What do we call the bulbous plant Allium cepa?
8. The word 'budget' is derived from which language's word for leather bag?
9. What type of monkey is the Barbary ape?
10. In the film world, who were Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Gibraltar; 2 Ice hockey; 3 Piano; 4 On Her Majesty's Secret Service; 5 Ultra heat treated; 6 Pakistan; 7 Orpheus; 8 B; 9 Pekingese; 10 Humphrey Repton.

Niner: DEVALUING

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

845215	gives a road,
9825	gives a second road,
634567	gives waterways.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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FENCE CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

Dudley Chronicle Thursday, April 13, 2017

Raw deal for sushi fans

Nathan Judah aims to find the best Japanese food locally and tries Rofuto at the top of Park Regis Hotel in Birmingham

Let's share – the chef's selection sushi platter which includes yellowfin, Loch Duart salmon and pickled mackerel

Oh my cod – the saffron miso black cod

MY quest to find a good Japanese restaurant in the Midlands took me to the swankily-named Rofuto in Birmingham.

Located on the 16th floor of the luxurious new Park Regis, it's the main dining attraction of the 253-room hotel which opened in 2016.

Rofuto brands itself on being an 'izakaya-style' restaurant, which to you and me translates as a kind of Japanese gastropub serving good food in a 'relaxed, informal atmosphere'.

We had some trouble finding it but boy, do you know you've arrived as you're greeted by a blinding and unnecessary purple strobe light. That is a shame as when we were shown to our seats, the restaurant décor is impressive.

Views

Rofuto cost a staggering £3 million to create, however clearly the cash wasn't splashed on staff training; we were seated on the next table to the only other couple in the restaurant. It doesn't take a genius to know this isn't a done thing.

There are some really nice touches to Rofuto; the space is vast and the views across Birmingham are lovely. It's a fantastically romantic setting, great for couples who fancy gazing into each others eyes all night.

And we had plenty of time to do just that as we weren't approached at our table for the best part of 20 minutes. To be fair to the young woman who did end up serving us, she was very pleasant and got a slightly irritating start to the meal back on track.

Her knowledge of saké (the rice wine-based drink) was pretty good if not flawless, however the bottle that she took five minutes to sell us was not available. Always start a Japanese meal with edamame and miso soup, it gets the tastebuds going before the sushi arrives.

I love sushi and have the appetite to eat copious amounts in one sitting until I too need to be rolled out the front door. We ordered portions of the yellowfin tuna and Loch Duart salmon avocado.

I really wanted to like this, I truly did – but it was ultimately disappointing. The fish on top was fine but the rice was the major problem – it quite obviously wasn't fresh and that was a shame. However, the mackerel sashimi was delicious. This beautiful fish spoke for itself and was well presented.

We then encountered our highlight of the meal, the sesame chicken yakitori. Perfectly cooked, fresh, juicy and plenty of meat, it was delicious. The sides were also pleasant – Japanese mushrooms and seaweed salad.

Finally our main course arrived, Rofuto's speciality – the saffron miso black cod. Many Japanese restaurants have their own take on Nobu's famous black cod and that's fine. It's nothing new and when cooked and seasoned well, it's delicious.

This was a disappointment though. The saffron overpowered the fish and while my other half thought it was OK, at £24 a dish, I want more than just OK.

Rofuto has the potential to be a stunning restaurant. It has charm, lovely décor, great space and stunning views, but it needs to make drastic changes if it's to succeed in the future.

The bill for the two of us was more than £150. That's getting into some really serious money.

Rofutu is a pleasant, if overpriced, place for a group to graze and have some cocktails before a night in the city.

But as a restaurant which is competing among Birmingham's best – it still has a long way to go.

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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Property has been tremendously enhanced

Having been just reduced, 55 Breamore Crescent, Earls Keep, Dudley, has outstanding accommodation that has been tremendously enhanced and meticulously maintained.

A detached family residence in exemplary order throughout, it lies in the favoured Earls Keep development. It is positioned in a quiet location and is now for sale through Taylors at £274,950.

With a new boiler installed, this home's outstanding accommodation includes a reception hall, a fitted cloakroom/WC, a store, an elegant lounge, a separate dining room, an upgraded kitchen with granite work surfaces and mainly integrated appliances and a utility room.

There are also four generous bedrooms, a principle bedroom with built-in wardrobes, a recently reappointed en-suite, bathroom, garage and a delightful, expertly tended, well-stocked sheltered rear garden with open aspect beyond.

In more detail, a canopy porch leads to the reception hall with an under-stairs store.

The front facing lounge is elegant and has a bay window with blinds and an Adam-style over mantle with a marble-effect inset and hearth and a living flame gas fire. The formal dining room has French doors to the garden.

Being upgraded in 2015, the kitchen has extensive granite work surfaces, a fine range of high gloss cream fronted wall and base units, integrated dishwasher and refrigerator, ceramic hob with fan assisted oven below and a stainless steel extractor hood above.

Upstairs, bedroom one has two built-in double wardrobes and a re-appointed/re-tiled shower room with a contemporary suite. Bedroom two has a built-in double wardrobe, bedroom three is L-shaped, as is bedroom four.

Outside is an integral garage and a delightful sheltered rear garden. There is also a garden store and greenhouse to remain, decking, screen fencing to the boundary's and a fine old brick wall to the boundary adding an additional feature.

DUDLEY £274,950

TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Taylors
TEL: 01902 880888
EMAIL: sedgley@taylors-estateagents.co.uk

KEY FEATURES

- 4 bedrooms
- Tremendously enhanced
- Meticulously maintained
- In exemplary order throughout
- Favoured development

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Also at Stourbridge and Halesowen

COSELEY, Hall Lane, Hurst Hill

ABSOLUTELY OUTSTANDING! Ga centrally heated and double glazed detached family home ON THREE LEVELS (with garage at rear) comprising porch, hall, good-sized lounge, dining room, fitted-kitchen, utility room, guest W/C, FIVE BEDROOMS, en-suite to MASTER SUITE, JACK & JILL BATHROOM adjoining bedrooms two and three, FAMILY BATHROOM, enclosed rear garden, driveway to front. EPC Rating C. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £269,950

OLDBURY, Speakers Close

This SUBSTANTIAL, DETACHED HOME comprises: Hall, Attractive Lounge, Dining Room, Well Fitted Kitchen, Utility, Guests W.C, FOUR BEDROOMS (Master with En-Suite), House Bathroom, Garage & Lovely Rear Garden. ●● VIEW EARLY ●● EPC D

New price

Offers in the Region Of £260,000

SEDGLEY, Dumbleberry Avenue, Brownswall estate

TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL!, Enviably situated, gas centrally heated, gas centrally heated & double glazed DETACHED requiring sympathetic updating in favoured district occupying a large plot comprisng; porch, hall, store, lounge with bay, dining room, kitchen, lobby, lengthy utility room/store,. Three bedrooms, bathroom, w.c. Large (24 ft) garage, good sized secluded rear garden. EPC: F SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £240,000

GORNAL WOOD, Eaton Crescent

Situated on a fantastic corner position in the extremely popular GORNAL WOOD area of Dudley this DETACHED bungalow offers so much. With entrance hallway and garage, this DETACHED BUNGALOW also benefits from L-shaped open lounge-diner, kitchen, bathroom, TWO BEDROOMS central heating, driveway and enveloped by low-maintenance gardens all around the property. NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC Rating D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £209,950

LANESFIELD, Lane Road

Superbly presented DOUBLE FRONTED BUNGALOW offering spacious living accommodation, central heating and double glazing & briefly comprising; entrance hallway, living room, breakfast kitchen, utility, stunning bathroom, dressing room, TWO BEDROOMS, garden, drive with double carport and garden to front. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £179,950

UPPER GORNAL, Harvest Close

Superbly presented semi-detached property located in Upper Gornal. Benefitting from a TWO STOREY EXTENSION to the side, this good-sized family home also boasts; porch, guest W/C, living room, attractive kitchen-diner, large garage with utility, FOUR BEDROOMS with EN-SUITE TO MASTER, bathroom, garden, parking and garden to front, gas central heating and double glazing. VIEWING HIGHLY RECOMMEND. EPC: C

Offers in excess of £174,950

SEDGLEY, Dingle View

Taylors Estate Agents are delighted to offer for sale this family home situated on the much sought after Dingle View in Sedgley. Benefiting from double glazing and central heating as well as corner position, this property also boasts porch, hall, living room, kitchen-diner, THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom. Front and rear gardens, detached garage with driveway. VIEWING HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £174,950

LOWER GORNAL, Bird Street

Spacious, gas centrally heated, double glazed semi detached bungalow nearing completion. ENVIABLY SITUATED within reasonable walking distance of the village & comprising; entrance vestibule, hall, kitchen with various integrated appliances, living/dining room, two bedrooms, bathroom. Off road parking to front, brick store. PLANS AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION AT AGENT'S SEDGLEY OFFICE. SAP: TBA

Offers in the region of £165,000

KINGSWINFORD, Standhills Road

An EXTENDED & IMPROVED FAMILY HOME set beyond the FULL WIDTH GATED DRIVE/FORECOURT and enjoying a low maintenance rear garden with SUBSTANTIAL STORE. A setting which enhances the INCREDIBLY SPACIOUS layout of HIGH SPECIFICATION accommodation including THREE LARGE BEDROOMS EPC D

New price

£159,950

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Also at Stourbridge and Halesowen

GORNAL WOOD, Guys Lane

SPACIOUS, gas centrally heated, double glazed FOUR DOUBLE BEDROOM detached recently completed to an exemplary specification comprising; porch, hall, cloakroom, dining room, lounge, magnificent 17 ft kitchen with a range of high gloss finish units, utility room. Gallery landing, Four double bedrooms. bathroom. Garage, landscaped grounds. EPC: B SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £400,000

SEDGLEY, The Ridgeway

Superbly presented detached property benefitting from central heating and double glazing. EXTENDED family home boasts porch, hallway, good-sized living room, refitted kitchen with open-plan dining room, guest W/C, utility room, bathroom, FOUR BEDROOMS, garage. Enclosed rear garden with SUMMER HOUSE, driveway to front and MAGNIFICENT PANORAMIC DISTANT VIEWS to the rear. EPC:E. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £269,950

WOODSETTON, Tamar Drive

SWIFT COMPLETION AVAILABLE. EXTENDED, gas centrally heated, double glazed detached with open aspect. Personal inspection is imperative for full appreciation of this property which comprises; Hall, Cloakroom, store, 22 ft through living/dining room and patio doors through to CONSERVATORY, extended/refitted breakfast kitchen & patio doors to outside. Principal 19ft 4" through bedroom possibilities of sub division to create en suite shower room?, 3 further bedrooms, bathroom, garage, garden, blocked paved drive. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £230,000

UPPER GORNAL, The Paddock

Gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed traditional style semi set at head of cul-de-sac (just off Clarence Street) this much improved home comprises entrance porch, reception hall, walk in cloaks, under stair store, 23'9" through living/dining room, refitted kitchen, upgraded utility room; three bedrooms (two with fitted wardrobes), tiled upgraded bathroom, large garage, recently block paved foregarden, sheltered rear garden. EPC C SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £149,950

NETHERTON, Swallow Close

This SIMPLY STUNNING & EXPENSIVELY APPOINTED, THREE BEDROOM, END-TERRACE HOME comprises: Hall, Stylish Sitting Room, STUNNING CONTEMPORARY GLOSS KITCHEN, Three Well Decorated Bedrooms, LUXURIOUS SHOWER ROOM, ATTRACTIVE REAR GARDEN! EPC B

New price **Offers in the Region Of £135,950**

COSELEY, Dimmock Avenue

A superbly presented traditional semi-detached property situated in the Coseley area of Wolverhampton which benefits from double glazing and gas central heating. This good-sized family home also boast entrance porch, hallway, living room, kitchen-diner, utility room/ study, THREE BEDROOMS, family bathroom, enclosed rear garden and driveway for ample cars to front. VIEWING IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £ 134,950

SEDGLEY, Kings Road

Fantastic end of terrace property set in the much sought after area of Sedgley. Retaining many of its original features and being uniquely presented, this TWO BEDROOM home also boasts gas central heating, THREE RECEPTION ROOMS, modern fitted kitchen, LOFT ROOM, family bathroom, enclosed rear garden which offers secure off roads parking. EPC: TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £134,950

DUDLEY, St Edmunds Close

NO UPWARD CHAIN - Stylish, recently built, Freehold gas centrally heated double glazed TWO DOUBLE BEDROOM end 'starter-home' presented in exemplary order throughout and representing an ideal opportunity for first time buyers. With PARKING to rear accommodation comprises; hall, cloakroom, kitchen with a fine range of 'satin-cream' effect units, lounge (with double French doors out to the garden), two double bedrooms, bathroom with white suite, garden, parking. EPC: B. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £124,950

TIPTON, Birmingham New Road

NO UPWARD CHAIN. As well as gas central heating and double glazing, this fantastically presented traditional semi-detached property boasts through lounge-diner, galley kitchen, conservatory, THREE BEDROOMS, family bathroom, enclosed rear garden and driveway to front. EPC: E SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £124,950

HOLLY HALL, Woodside Road

This MOST APPEALING & DECEPTIVELY SPACIOUS, SEMI-DETACHED HOME comprises: Hall, TWO RECEPTION ROOMS, Fitted Kitchen, Three Family Bedrooms, House Bathroom & Established Garden. NO UPWARD CHAIN! EPC:

£119,950

WOODCROSS, Beacon Street

Situated on periphery of Sedgley (just off Bath Street), a tremendously modernised, Freehold, gas centrally heated & double glazed intermediate "starter home" that has been much enhanced by present vendors comprising; lounge, refitted breakfast kitchen with a fine range of "cherrywood" effect units. Two bedrooms, bathroom with a white suite. Secluded rear garden, off road parking. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £119,950

DUDLEY, Corser Street

NO UPWARD CHAIN. Within walking distance of Milking Bank, and all associated amenities, a gas centrally heated (recent combi boiler), uPVC double glazed THREE BEDROOM intermediate 'starter home' in popular district briefly comprising; entrance porch, reception hall, lounge with bay, transverse dining kitchen with bay. Three bedrooms, bathroom with white suite, Parking to front (for one car), and good size sheltered rear garden. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £114,950

BROCKMOOR, Leys Road

This RATHER DECEPTIVE & MOST APPEALING, MODERN STYLE, TWO BEDROOM HOME comprises: Pleasant Lounge, Spacious Well Fitted Kitchen, Two Good First Floor Bedrooms, Well Appointed Bathroom, Attractive Front & Rear Gardens & Rear Driveway. EPC: D

New price **£108,500**

SEDGLEY, Lime Road

A conscientiously maintained majority gas centrally heated (recent combi boiler) and UPVC double glazed intermediate 'starter home' with further potential. Set in a popular/convenient district the accommodation includes entrance porch, reception hall, store, lounge, kitchen, dining room, THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom, through lobby, outer porch, two stores, WC, off road parking, garden. EPC Rating D. SEDGLEY.

WAS £112,000...NOW £107,950

PENSNETT, Byrchen Moor Gardens

This STYLISHLY DECORATED & EXPENSIVELY APPOINTED, TWO BEDROOM, MEWS STYLE HOME comprises: Attractive Lounge, MODERN BREAKFAST KITCHEN, Two First Floor Bedrooms, Beautifully Appointed Bathroom, Off Road Parking & Pretty Rear Garden. EPC: E

£107,500

WOODCROSS, Smith Close

Spacious gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed semi detached with further potential set at head of quiet cul-de-sac convenient for so many amenities. Superb accommodation includes imposing reception hall, store, lounge, dining room, kitchen, rear lobby, two stores, separate toilet, wet room. Three generous bedrooms, bathroom, garden, off road parking (kerb dropped). EPC: C. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £105,000

BRIERLEY HILL, Adelaide Street

This CHARMING, PERIOD STYLE, MID-TERRACE HOME comprises: Lovely Through Lounge with Dining Area, Well Fitted Kitchen, Two First Floor Bedrooms, House Bathroom, Low Maintenance Astro Turf Style Rear Garden & Versatile Loft Space. EPC:

£89,950

COSELEY, Ebenezer Street

●HUGE POTENTIAL● This traditional terraced property is situated in the popular Coseley area of Wolverhampton. Offering huge potential for IMPROVEMENT, this THREE BEDROOM home benefits from open plan living-dining room, cellar, good-sized kitchen, bathroom and rear garden. NO UPWARD CHAIN - OFFERS OVER £84,950 TO BE RECEIVED BY 12 NOON ON FRIDAY 28.4.17 EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers over £84,950

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3 Bed End-Terraced House
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64 Alexandra Road, Wednesbury
2 Bed Semi-Detached House
Guide: £55,000 plus

34 Elmdon Road, Wolverhampton
3 Bed Semi-Detached House
Guide: £29,000 - £34,000

62 Dibdale Street, Dudley
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Future is electric with Skoda Vision E

Škoda's appearance at the Shanghai Motor Show later this month is characterized by electric change: With the Vision E study, the company provides its first brand-specific outlook on the future of individual mobility.

The emotionally designed five-door SUV coupé can travel up to 500 kilometres on purely electric power and meets the level 3 requirements for autonomous driving. Škoda is intensively pursuing the electrification of its model range, and will be offering five purely electric models in various segments by 2025.

Tomorrow's mobility – planning and development is in full swing at Škoda. The first purely electrically driven and autonomous driving concept car in the company's history embodies the brand's interpretation of electric vehicles.

At 4,645 mm long, 1,917 mm wide and 1,550 mm tall, the Škoda Vision E has great road presence. Thanks to the long wheelbase of 2,850 mm, as well as the short overhangs at the front and rear, the designers have created an extremely spacious interior – as always with Škoda. In the future-oriented vehicle concept, the elevated seating position typical of SUV models and the generous space combine with a dynamic silhouette and gently sloping roof line in the style of a coupé.

Thanks to the system output of 225 kW, the Škoda Vision E accelerates instantaneously and dynamically. The top speed is 180 km/h (112mph). The powerful lithium-ion batteries and optimal recuperation allow a range of up to 500 kilometres (311 miles).

Thanks to intelligent management, the two electric engines cooperate with maximum efficiency and drive the Škoda Vision E over all four wheels. The front- and rear-wheel drive is suitably adjusted to ensure the highest degree of stability, dynamism and safety at all times.

With the Vision E, Škoda is also providing an outlook on the forms of autonomous driving coming soon. According to the latest surveys, around 15 percent of all new cars could be driving completely autonomously in 2030.

The concept car Škoda Vision E achieves the prerequisites for level 3 autonomous driving: It can operate independently in traffic jams, go into autopilot on motorways, stay in lane and swerve, carry out overtaking manoeuvres, independently search for free parking spaces and park and leave parking spaces alone. To enable this, various sensors with different ranges and numerous cameras constantly monitor the traffic situation.

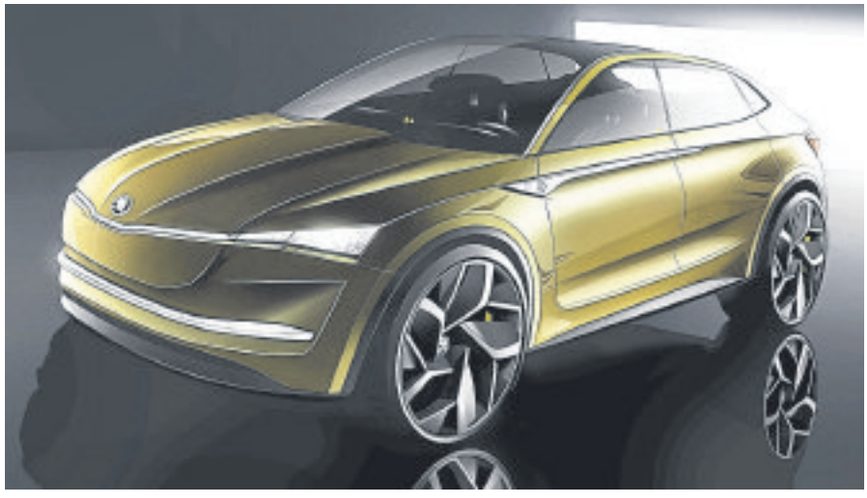
Electromobility plays a key role in the company's global growth strategy. Škoda develops its own vehicle concepts for purely electric mobility on the basis of the MEB Group platform.

The electrification of Škoda's model range will begin as early as 2019 with the launch of the Škoda Superb with plug-in hybrid drive.

Škoda's first purely electric series-produced vehicle will be released shortly afterwards in 2020. By 2025, the brand will have expanded its range to include five purely electric cars in various segments.

Generous space combines with a dynamic silhouette

The car has a gently sloping roof line in style of a coupé



The five-door coupe can travel up to 500 kilometres on purely electric power

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Dudley Chronicle Thursday, April 13, 2017

Building on success of first generation

By James Parker

Mazda has announced UK prices and specification for the all-new Mazda CX-5.

Launched in 2012, the original Mazda CX-5 changed perceptions in the compact SUV segment with its award-winning combination of style, driving dynamics and efficiency. Winning acclaim from customers and media alike, global sales of over 1.5 million mean it now accounts for roughly 25 per cent of Mazda's global sales volume with more than 32,000 CX-5s having been sold in the UK.

Now with enhancements across the board, an all-new interior and a fully-revised body structure the all-new Mazda CX-5 aims to raise the bar even higher, delivering new levels of style, refinement and driving pleasure. Designed under the concept of 'Refined Toughness' the second-generation CX-5 features a powerful evolution of Mazda's front-end design, while sleeker sides and a lower roofline underscore its solid stance and elegant proportions. Inside, Mazda's human-centric development ethos delivers an interior that merges meticulous cockpit ergonomics with a sophisticated, high-quality and spacious cabin environment.

A product of Mazda's 'Jinba-Ittai' car-and-driver as one philosophy, the new CX-5 delivers new levels of driver engagement and comfort. With particular attention paid to reducing noise and vibration within the cabin, the CX-5 provides premium levels of comfort and refinement, while at the same time improving on the class-leading handling precision and driver involvement of the outgoing car. With 15 per cent stiffer torsional body rigidity than the outgoing model, refinements to the steering, suspension and brakes, plus the introduction of G-Vectoring Control (GVC) the CX-5 is more comfortable, refined and responsive than ever.

Available in two trim levels, the ten model UK range starts at just £23,695. Both Mazda's SKYACTIV-MT six-speed manual and SKYACTIV-Drive six-speed automatic transmissions feature in the range, as does the latest generation of Mazda's intelligent i-ACTIV all-wheel drive (AWD) system.

Powered by a familiar range of SKYACTIV engines, the 2.0-litre 165ps SKYACTIV-G petrol engine is available in SE-L Nav and Sport Nav trim and is offered exclusively with front-wheel drive and Mazda's six-speed SKYACTIV-MT manual gearbox.

Making up the bulk of the range, the popular 2.2-litre 150ps SKYACTIV-D diesel is available with front-wheel drive and AWD transmissions, plus comes with a choice of SKYACTIV-MT or SKYACTIV-Drive gearbox. Sitting at the top of the range, the flagship 2.2-litre 175ps SKYACTIV-D comes exclusively in Sport Nav trim and is equipped with Mazda's i-ACTIV AWD, and like the lower output diesel, it can be matched to either automatic or manual transmission.

Sandard equipment includes LED headlights, auto power-folding door mirrors, dual-zone climate control, DAB radio and a 7" colour touch-screen display with integrated navigation. Sport Nav cars include a reversing camera, 8-way power adjustable driver's seat and Smart keyless entry, plus heated front seats and steering wheel. Offered in a Mazda for the first time, Sport Nav models also feature a power lift tailgate, plus a new head-up display (HUD) that projects directly onto the windscreen and features Traffic Sign Recognition.

Jeremy Thomson, managing director of Mazda Motors UK, said: "The CX-5 will go down as a landmark car in Mazda's history, not only did it introduce SKYACTIV Technology and KODO: Soul of Motion design, it also showcased how Mazda could make an SUV that was stylish, great to drive and capable of luring customers from premium badged rivals. And today the all-new Mazda CX-5 takes this to the next stage, elevating exterior design, cabin quality and refinement to new levels of sophistication, whilst at the same time ensuring Mazda's love of driving is even more apparent in the handling."

The new Mazda CX-5 goes on sale in the UK on June 30.

MAZDA CX-5, FROM £23,695

The second-generation CX-5 features a powerful evolution of Mazda's front-end design

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DOREMA QUATTRO porch awning, 380cm x 240cm, as new, still boxed. £595. o.n.o. Cost New over £800. 01902 783174.

FLEETWOOD CRYSTAL 148 CARAVAN
4-berth, 3 way fridge, 4 burner hob and grill, water heater, toilet compartment, clean and tidy, many extras
£1,250 ono.
01384 828287.

LET US SELL YOUR CARAVAN/ Motorhome for you and get the best possible price. Severn Valley Leisure, DY8 4HP. 01384 390183

STATIC CARAVAN
Situated in tranquil Mid Wales, 2009 Swift Moselle, 35x12, two bed, GCH, DG, excellent condition, many extras.
£19,950.
07399 628090 or
01902 900331.

SUNCAMP FULL SIZE AWNING, blue with matching curtains, size 9-10, fit 16ft caravan, very good condition, £275 ono. 07743 261318.

THIS COULD BE YOURS

SWIFT CHALLENGER
480SE, 2000,
2 berth,
end washroom,
mover,
dual heater,
fridge, cooker,
water containers.
£3,750.
01952 461263.

caravans wanted

WANTED ALL CARAVANS
Any age or condition
Also motorhomes wanted.
TOP PRICES PAID
Immediate collection.
CALL THOMAS
07717 280 996

CARAVAN WANTED Can collect asap. Caravan wanted. Call me on 07717 090817

fishing

FISHING TACKLE WANTED anything considered. New or Old 01902 751 086 or 07931 568716

music shop

RECORDS/CDS/MEMORABILIA wanted & sold 50s -90s+ record shop wolves wv1 3hl 07760168972

holidays

caravan parks

LUXURY HOLIDAY HOME for sale on 5* park. Golf, fishing, bar & restaurant, pet friendly £24,995 inc. 2017 site fees www.pearllake.co.uk 01568 708 326

self catering holidays

BURNHAM-ON-SEA
Self Catering Holiday Apartments
Disabled Facilities
Pet Friendly
01278 794111
www.GoSomerset.co.uk

Saundersfoot Bungalow
3 Bed, All En suite, Sleeps 8, Central heating, TV Video, Washing machine, Dishwasher, Microwave
Ring Brochure
0121 353 1575

mind, body & soul

massage

TRADITIONAL CHINESE Massage 'Hot Stones'. 01902 903659, 07741 696099. Compton WV6 8AF

what's on

book fair

BOOK FAIR, Kinver Community Centre, DY7 6ER, Sunday 16th April, Est 1979, Waverley. Next antique Fair 7th May. Stalls available for all. Home made refreshments Call 0121 550 4123

bouncy castles

BOUNCY CASTLE HIRE Jumpin-Jens.co.uk Professional inflatable hire, fully insured. 079700 24953

markets

BESCOT
OPEN EASTER SUNDAY
SUNDAY MARKET
OPEN EVERY SUNDAY
Banks's Stadium, Walsall FC
WS1 4SA, FREE PARKING, J9 M6
07889 975701 All hard standing

3 Home & Services

furniture

BEDROOM SUITE 4 PIECE
Honey Pine Colour, very good codnition, minor scratches only. Consisting of childs bedframe and slats, Wardrobe, Corner Drawers and Cheval Mirror. Collect from DY3.
£195.
07968 000479.

CHESTERFIELD
3 and 2 Seater Anitique Oxblood Red Sofa set 2 months old Nice condition can arrange delivery
£895 ono
07504 802579

in your garden

A LANDSCAPING & GARDEN SERVICE
Regular Garden Maintenance.
Fencing supplied & fitted.
Jungles cleared & restored.
Garden tidy-ups. New lawns laid.
Paving, Hedge Cutting. Free estimates.
01902 683607 or 07939 634708

GREENHOUSES FROM £263.35
Pavilion Garden Centre WV6 7EZ
Tel: 01902 701001

items for sale

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED
That the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

HEAVY DUTY clothes rails, unused, 2x 5ft H1550xW1525xD510mm, 2x 4ft 2 tier, H2055xW1220xD510mm. £150. 01384 254044.

PAPER and CARD
For all Printing Machines including Digital
MERCIA PAPER LTD
Lower Walsall Street
W'ton, WV1 2ES
07934 044488

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

items wanted

A BEST CASH PRICE

FOR ALL RAILWAY COLLECTIONS
Any gauge or age
Hornby/Bachmann/Bowmans/ Roundhouse/Graham/Farsh/ any live steam. Also Die Cast, Corgi, Dinky, Spot On.
01384 836219 / 07891 713547
thetrainmaster67@hotmail.com

A BEST CASH PRICE PAID FOR DIE CAST CARS / LORRIES / TOY SOLDIERS
Air fix, Britains, Corgi, Dinky, Spot on, Tri-ang.
Best prices paid.
Any condition.
Collections bought.
Telephone 01922 327897 or 07976 691563.

READERS ARE ADVISED to carefully consider all of their options before agreeing to the sale of any of their items.

SPECTRUM GAMES Wanted, plus any Spectrum 128k +2 computer wanted also any old Crash magazines wanted. 01902 892918.

loans

READERS ARE REMINDED that they may require professional advice before entering into obligations.

t.v. / home entertainment

service

AERIAL AND TV SPECIALIST Any TV Repairs, Plasma, LED etc. CCTV cameras supplied & fitted. Any area. Free Estimates. 7 days. Digital aerials, Sky installation, Wall mounts / TV setups. 07850 330251.

specialists at your service

aerials

AA DIGITAL AERIALS
SATELLITE & CCTV
AERIALS FITTED FROM £75
Work Guaranteed
01902 858191
01384 429166
01543 439095
01922 716029
07833 738857
CheckATrade.com

ALAN JONES
THE ORIGINAL AERIAL SPECIALIST, THE BEST!
Est 1955 - 59 years at the top!
Recommended by thousands
Genuine, honest, 100% reliable
WE HAVE WATCHED THEM ALL COME AND GO
Call: 01902 885985
ANY PROBLEM SOLVED

A AERIAL AND SKY SPECIALIST CCTV cameras fitted/tv wallmount, free quote/any area. 07850 330251

CLEAR VISION AERIALS Freeview, FreeSat, Sky, CCTV. Aerials from £79. Dishes from £79. OAP DISCOUNT. Tel: 01902 752036.

alarms/security

PREMIER ALARMS
Supplied and Fitted £195
Servicing and Repairs
12 Months Warranty
All areas covered
All quotes beaten!
Call: 0121 601 9791

appliance repairs

A SAME DAY REPAIR - Cookers Autos Fridges Vacs and Micros. Call 07900 578897 / 07801 746853.

building services

DAVIES & SON BUILDERS
Over 35 years experience in the industry
All aspects of building work including: Extensions, loft conversions, roofing, driveways & landscaping.
Discounts offered.
01902 579592 / 07837 994465

domestic cleaning

CLEAN (midlands ltd) FOR YOU
Domestic Cleaning & Ironing Service.
Friendly, Reliable & Trustworthy.
Call Anita on: 07854 163 804.

domestic repairs & services

SAME DAY Low Cost Repairs. Washers, Dryers Electric Cookers. 12 mths guarantee. 07850 355552.

drain clearance

ALL DRAIN AND SEWER Blockages cleared fast. Call Fast Clean: 01902 736424.

driveways & patios

CRETE BY DESIGN
Concrete Imprinting
• BLOCK PAVING • TARMACING
FREE QUOTES
01902 489633 (day)
or 01902 604187 (eve)

driveways/patio cleaning

LOW COST DRIVEWAYS AND POWER WASHING
NO CASH UPFRONT!
Old driveways restored or built from scratch
Driveways powerwashed, Block paving re sanded & sealed, exterior walls and all hard surface areas.
01902 824661or 07513 678259

electrical services

A BARGAIN PRICED house re-wire, fuseboards etc. Grahams Electrical. 01902 842739, 07783 471949.

ALL HOME ELECTRICS NAPIT registered. Fully insured. For a free quote call 07583 320318.

fencing

PORTWAY FENCING
SPECIAL OFFER
10 Bays of quality fencing, concrete posts, gravel boards £695
Heavy duty panels supplied & fitted.
0121 531 5250 / 07866 137 656
Mon - Fri 8am - 4.30pm
Sat 8am - 12noon
83 Portway Rd, W'bury
DELIVERY AVAILABLE
www.portwayfencing.co.uk

ACE FENCING. A better quality panel. Supply only. Free quote: 31 Bank St. WV10 9DU.01902 723910

gardening services

GARDENS TIDIED from £5 per garden. 25 years experience. Call 01902 713106 / 07813 184086.

1ST TREE AND TURF
All aspects of Landscaping,Tree Surgery, Block Paving, Fencing and Turfing.
Call Gary on: 01902 443069 or 07742 430513

gas fitting

GAS SERVICES
• Boilers • Cookers
• Fires • Gas Checks
• Landlord Certificates
• Gas Leaks Traced
Fitted, Serviced and Repaired
Same Day Service
Free Quotes
DISCOUNTS FOR OAPs
Call: 01902 366855/ 07761 973975

A BOILER BREAKDOWN, COOKER, FIRE,
FITTED-SERVICED-REPAIRED
Landlord certs.
All areas covered.
J&E Heating.
Call John:
01902 562664 /07969 687832

handyman services

YOUR LOCAL HANDYMAN
FREE QUOTES
All work guaranteed, Most trades covered, References available on request. No job too big or too small!
CALL MIKE: 07947 621047
0121 6010479

LOCK & CARPENTRY Plumbing, Small job specialist. Free quotes 01902 683100 or 07934 460864.

SH PROPERTY SERVICES Building work, Carpentry, Painting & Decorating, Gardening, Welding & Fabrication 07505 539613 or 01922 721007

house clearances

A ABSOLUTE BEST cash price paid for house clearances and bereavements. Also removals undertaken. 07852 172641 / 07710 360327

AAA OVEN CLEANING, Ovens, Hobs, Aga / Range / Micro / Extractors. 01902 689418 / 07910 921736

plumbing & heating

Keiron Jones Plumbing & Heating
Full heating systems £2200
Boiler Changes £100
Longer warranty available upon request, fires and surrounds also available.
For Free Quotes Call:
01902 403823 07811 855231

K NASH & SON CH, combi boiler & 6 rads £2200. 7 year warranty available 01902 790327/ 07973 721206, www.knashandsonheating.co.uk

CENTRA HEAT
Boiler Servicing inc Free Landlords Certificate.
Power Flushing, Boiler/ System Repairs
£200 OFF/Trade in old boiler
Installed in May. T&C apply
01902 845211

plumbers

G M PLUMBING SERVICES Complete Bathrooms, Kitchens, Taps Showers,Blockages 07976 012468

painters / decorators

CALL M & B DECORATORS
City & Guilds
No job too small
Free Quote
01902 494555

LOVE 2 WALLPAPER
Reliable & Friendly, Professional
Female Painters & Decorators
Attention to detail, competitive prices.
For the Perfect Finish with minimum hassle.
Plastering & Coving Work Undertaken
01384 287577 or 07812 484194
www.love-2-wallpaper.co.uk

A PROFESSIONAL DECORATING service by RC Decorating. Free competitive quotes: 07773 025880.

C I PAINTING & DECORATING Over 30 yrs experience,City & Guilds approved. Free Quotes. 07913 732756 or 01902 650716.

C&D DECORATING City & Guilds / Wallpapering. Tiling and Flooring. Free quotes, call 07973 286286.

paving

P&S PAVING MIDLANDS
• Block Paving • Drives & Paths
• Patios • Landscaping • Fencing
FREE QUOTATIONS
5 Year Guarantee on all works
0800 858 9073/ 01902 212 293

plans prepared

ADAM DESIGN, Building Plans. Drawn and submitted to council. Tel: 01902 620200 / 07841 654037. Email: adamdesign@sky.com

BUILDING Plans: Prepared/submitted. K J Bradley 01902 373248 07792 165767. www.plans4u.co.uk

plastering

STEVES PLASTERING SERVICE Clean and Reliable, All Work Undertaken, All Areas. Call 0121 567 5919 / 07977 262943.

removals

KT HOUSE REMOVALS
12 years experience.
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL LOADS.
LOCAL OR DISTANCE. FULLY INSURED.
Free Quotes - Call Ric on:
07771 727119

KINGSWINFORD REMOVALS AND HOUSE CLEARANCES
We move anything.
Professional service,
45 years' experience,
DFS approved and we take the stress away.
Please call:
07966 281957

A CHEAPER REMOVAL
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL REMOVALS.
FULLY INSURED. 7 days.
01902 89 49 16
07807 77 30 35
FREE QUOTES
Student/OAP Discounts

A2B REMOVALS Cheap and reliable removal service. Insured. 07817 842980 or 01902 744829.

CALL DEAN NOW: For all your Removal needs. 07429 453209/ 01902 830870 / 01384 940260.

roofing

ROOFING
main, flat, felt, firestone rubber, fibreglass, all repointing, fascias, soffits, gutters. Free quotes. All quotes beaten. 8am-8pm.
01902 722447.

SF ROOFING & GUTTERING
25% OFF
25 YEARS EXPERIENCE!
Flat, Main roofs, rubber or felt, repaired and replaced, all repointing. Guttering repaired and replaced.
BEAT ALL QUOTES GUARANTEED
Call Sean 01902 829158 8am to 8pm

MG ROOFING Flat roofs, tiling, roof repairs, fascias and gutters. Call 01902 238989 / 07580 465449.

S T ROOFING All roofing work carried out. Call: 01902 884705 / 07841 842824

rubbish removal

LETS TALK RUBBISH No Skips Needed.Load/Remove any Waste, House Clearance. 07969 628382

skip hire

AN ABSOLUTE AFFORDABLE
CASTLE SKIP HIRE
Mini, midi and large skips
GRAB HIRE AND MINI DIGGER AVAILABLE
01384 237577
01902 405745
07719 671845

AT M&M SKIPS
Fast, friendly service
All areas covered
All sizes
Same day service
Freephone
0800 619 0189
07904 915016

MT SKIPS & GRAB HIRE
Save £££s
All size skips and all areas covered
Same day delivery faster than a phone call!!!
Open 7 days a week
SCRAP CARS REMOVED FOR FREE
07920 88 57 74 or 01384 24 09 56

BIG JOHN MOVES RUBBISH! No Skips, we load, fast friendly service, 25 Lister Rd, Dudley DY2 8JR, Est 35 years, 01384 232359.

STONES SKIP HIRE 0121 557 1480 / 07886 721875 www.stonesskiphire.co.uk

upholstery

BILSTON UPHOLSTERY A suite/ chair re-upholstered / repaired as new. Free Quotes: 01902 404698.

UPHOLSTERY SERVICES 3pcs/ springs/caravans/pubs/club/antiques. 01902 689844 / 07817 842980.

4 Pets & Animals

equestrian corner

ALL READERS are advised to check if Horses, Donkeys or Ponies have the required Passport information.

GRAZING AND STABLE £20pw Westcroft area. 07956 824381.

guns & dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

AIR GUNS, VINTAGE/ ANTIQUE GUNS, SHOT GUNS, TAXIDERMY- BIG BORE GUNS, TRAPS ETC WANTED. MATCH AIR RIFLES WANTED.
07968 624202

pets corner

GREYHOUNDS MAKE WONDERFUL PETS
All neutered, innoculated and microchipped.
Call 01922 412212 or
www.rgtwolverhampton.co.uk
RGT Wolverhampton
@RGTWolves

FRENCH BULLBOG puppies, 3 females, KC reg, health checked, high quality, £950. 07913 981460.

PEDIGREE LABRADOR Puppies, gold, (not KC reg), chunky boys and girls, ready to go, £500 each. 07532 177496 or 01785 712056.

YORKSHIRE TERRIER puppies, four boys, two girls, £250 each. 07710 555932.

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:
1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree.
Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

RESPONSIBLE LOVING HOMES WANTED
Molly long haired beautiful german shepherd 3 years old
Dusty&Drake 12mth old lurcher x cross breed, big boys, lovely natured affectionate
Scooby 12mth brindle staffie
Layla 2yr old golden lab girl, understanding home due to past history
Bertie Mature gold labrador, deaf, active, affectionate
charlie black cocker spaniel 3 years old
Bailey golden cocker spaniel 5 years preferable home with Charlie
Annette.
01686 668652

ROSEDENE RESCUE CENTRE
1, Radley Road, Rushall, Walsall. WS4 1LN.
01922 627013.
Open Monday to Saturday 11am - 5pm.
Sundays - Bank Holidays 11am - 4pm.
Takes in relinquished dogs from owners, all areas (if they are vet checked/up to date with jabs.)
Donations of dog food, toys, bedding and vet bills always appreciated.

TWO SMALL CROSS BREEDS
Very loving Mother and Daughter
Desperately need a forever home, owner no longer able to care for them.
07732 704786.

6 Property

mobile homes

HIGHLEY SHROPSHIRE
Stately 40 x 20ft, hall, living room, dining room, kitchen, utility, two double bedrooms one en-suite, fitted wardrobes, bathroom, extras, mains services, small garden, shed, residential park in peaceful location near village, no chain.
£123,950.
01746 861199 or 07848 690406.

MOBILE HOME FOR SALE
A very quiet park, pet friendly, short walk to shops, doctors, dentist etc with bus stop outside park, situated in Broseley, Shropshire.
The home has two double bedrooms, separate lounge, kitchen, bathroom with shower, d/g, c/h with an easy managed laid out garden, well maintained throughout.
£59,995.
01952 883554.

overseas property

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

properties wanted

WE PAY 100% of purchase price EVERY TIME! For Your House CASH
You agree the price, we buy the house.
• NO AGENTS FEES • COMPLETION TO SUIT YOU
• FREE SOLICITORS • ANY HOUSE, ANY CONDITION
BLACK COUNTRY HOMES
0800 999 999 6
01384 500 500
30 yrs
* subject to terms www.black-countryhomes.co.uk *

Wolverhampton properties
CASH NOW FOR YOUR HOUSE
UP TO £25,000
We can buy your house in 2 days
CASH ADVANCE NOW (in 24hrs)
• Free Solicitors • No Fees • Any House • Any Condition
0800 389 6788
01902 628047 Lines open 24 hours a day 7 days a week Terms applicable

LOOK
WE BUY ANY HOUSE
national homeowners helpline.co.uk
in a mess? talk in confidence
we can help
WE PAY MORE
ANY AREA
ANY CONDITION
*Terms may apply
24-7 0800 085 7499
24-7 0121 308 7786

I CAN BEAT ANY PRICE!
I pay 100% of purchase price
Call now for the best price on your house
GUARANTEED
■ Guaranteed offer* ■ Free solicitors * Terms apply
■ Any condition ■ No fees*
24 hours Free phone or landline
0800 783 2822
01384 226086
Dewmark Homes

pink run by women
sell quick
• No Fees* • Any area*
• Any property • Repossessions stopped
• Any condition • Deceased estates
• Free confidential service
Call free 24 hours * subject to terms
0800 044 8109 01922 689023

Private Investor
We are looking for houses in your area. We will take any type of property in any condition. Call us first - highest prices paid
Telephone
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straight forward investment solutions

STOP WE PAY MORE!
100% every time* Any Property*
Free Solicitors No Fees* Any Condition*
01902 628 047
* subject to terms

Home Cash Buyer
Sell today, sign today, complete when u wish
£££ RENT BACK OPTIONS £££
Houses / Land Required
Ring Paul 24/7 Local 07870 341 089
Sandwell area: Call 0121 696 4154
Walsall & Cannock area: Call 01922 432049
Wolverhampton: Call 01902 489901
www.homecashbuyer.co.uk

WE BUY ANY HOUSE CASH
CALL US FREE 24 Hours/ 7days
0800 246 1047
CASH ADVANCE WITHIN 24 HOURS
WE OFFER £20,000 CASH ADVANCE
NO Fees & FREE Solicitors We Buy Any Area & Any Condition
www.ukfastsale.co.uk

Need to sell your home fast?
We can help you make a fresh start
With solutions to suit ...
you can clear your debts and make a fresh start
Purchase Agreed Within 7 DAYS
ALL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED
COMPLETE ON DATE TO SUIT
FREE VALUATION AND LEGALS
FREE FRIENDLY ADVICE
LOCAL COMPANY
MARION | PROPERTY SOLUTIONS
WHY NOT CALL US TODAY
for an informal, friendly and confidential chat?
*Terms and Conditions apply
01384 930 979 OUR LINES ARE OPEN 24/7

accommodation to let

NOTICE TO READERS
It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments/contracts.

DOUBLE ROOM, in shared house, Willenhall Road, £70pw inc bills suit professional. 07904 106847.

FURNISHED 2-bed flat very clean, all mod, working people. £485pcm Oxley area. 01902 238770.

A 1 BED FURNISHED FLAT Tettenhall area.CH. No DSS 07976 263435 / 01902 700 028.

5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering into any obligations.

business directory

accountants

ACCOUNTANCY SERVICES for Small Business. Competitive Rates. Call 01902 882600

commercial premises

UNITS AND OFFICE SPACE to let in Oldbury, West Bromwich and Walsall. Easy Terms. Ashmore Properties 0121 520 5318.

plant, machinery & tools

R AND J SITE SERVICES LTD
Grab Hire, Plant Hire Groundwork and all types of aggregates.
Anywhere in the Midlands.
Call 01384 211420 / 07793 079103
randjsiteservices@hotmail.com

7 Jobs

building & construction

PAINTERS REQUIRED Immediate start Must have CSCS card and full PPE Tel 07973 631174.

employment wanted

EXPERIENCED Bricklayer seeks employment.
07341 021774.

engineering

CENTRELESS GRINDERS
We have current vacancies for bar grinders.
Excellent rates of pay for suitably skilled, experienced operatives, overtime available as standard.
May consider individuals with engineering experience as full training could be given.
Please ring in first instance and ask for
Matt to discuss
01384 397040
or email
matt@green-preece-grinding.co.uk
NO AGENCIES

part time - general

HANDY PERSON / GO FOR required for small estate Wall Heath area. Must be strong and experienced, preferably with building trade background
Box Number P20768
Express and Star
Queen Street
Wolverhampton WV11ES

HOUSE SITTER required. Suit retired active person of proven integrity. Swindon / Stourton area. Must be car driver.
Box Number P20767 ,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

courses

The TRUE earning potential for part time & full time driving instructors fully explained.
Go4a wheelz 4+
www.4wheelz.co.uk/career

OUTSIDE CLEANER required Kingswinford / A449 area - 1 to 2 days per week. Need to be fit and dog friendly. Must be car driver. £10 per hour.
Box Number P20766 ,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

hotel & catering

Award winning bar/restaurant
Mad O'Rourkes Pie Factory
is recruiting for a
TRAINEE MANAGER
to work alongside our current management team.
Previous bar work would be an advantage but excellent customer service is most important.
Send CVs to
Peter Towler,
50 Hurst Lane,
Tipton DY4 9AB.

full time - general

EXPANDING WASTE MANAGEMENT COMPANY
requires
1 x LOADING SHOVEL DRIVER
(min 2 years experience)
1 x HOOK LIFT/RORO DRIVER
(min 2 years experience)
2 x YARD OPERATIVES
(Physical outdoor work - training provided)
Competitive rates of pay.
Ring
ECL
on 01384 213332

8 Motoring

cars over £1500

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

LOW MILEAGE
CHEVROLET SPARK LT, Blue, 1.2 engine, petrol, 35000 miles, hpi clear, full service history, well looked after, all receipts kept, air con, alloy wheels, CD and MP3 player, ipod plug, electric mirrors, all electric mirrors, climate control, traction control, cheap on fuel.
£3,999.
07851 378721.

LOW MILEAGE
FORD FIESTA 1.2
64 plate, Navy blue,
13,000 miles, 1 years MoT,
3-dr, petrol, 1 previous owner,
FSH,
£5,995 ono.
07867 601027.

MUST BE SEEN
FORD KA
59 plate,
low mileage,
fsh,
reliable,
low tax,
8 months MoT.
£1,900.
07948 519022.

MERCEDES BENZ SLK230SE
2002, 40,000 miles, Special Edition, hardtop convertible, silver, air con, fsh, MoT, auto, cruise control, alloys, leather interior, excellent condition.
£4,250.
07866 580990.

PRESTIGE
MERCEDES SL350 AUTOMATIC CONVERTIBLE
54 reg, 74,000 miles, FSH, Obsidian Black, with cream leather, keyless go, power hood, panoramic glass roof, anti roll bar wind deflector, alloys, sat nav, Xenon lights, 2 keys.
Absolutely pristine.
£9,999.
07836 204450
or
07545 601552.

MUST BE SEEN
MINI COOPER S
2004/54 plate, six speed, grey, half leather, CD, air con, alloys,
new discs and pads,
MoT October, HPi clear,
clean car,
£2,500,
07546 779139.
Van or large 4 x 4 in exchange.

RENAULT CLIO DIESEL
Hatchback DCi 90
Dynamique Media Nav Energy white, 2014, 5dr, 1500cc, FSH, immaculate condition, tax free, eco 2 model, low mileage 17,700, stop/start.
£8,195 ono.
07919 527106.

VAUXHALL ASTRA SXI
2009, 51,000 miles, black, abs, electric windows, alarm, long MoT, central locking, CD, petrol. Drives great.
£3,250 ono.
07855 023492.

VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 DESIGN
Red, automatic, 43,000 miles, 07 plate, air con, electric windows, 3 door, alloys, new tyres, full MoT.
£2,300.
Telephone 01902 791415.

cars under £1500

MUST BE SEEN
CITROEN C2 1.6VTS
05 reg., black, long MoT, very good condition, usual extras.
£895 ono
07874 870104.

LOOK
FIAT PANDA
06 reg, long MoT, good body, excellent runner, 115,000 miles hence the price of
£650 ono.
Telephone 07810 590427.

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ClassifiedAds

Bloxwich hit form to floor their rivals

Some of the members with coaches in the middle Sara Zollino, Lucia Zollino and Elaine Mills

Coaching session with Sara Zollino

BLOXWICH Gymnastics Club are jumping for joy following a golden display in the West Midlands Gymnastic Association's George Finney Championships.

The club returned home from Fenton Manor in Stoke, where over 1,000 youngsters competed, with a hat-trick of gold medals and a silver after a brilliant series of displays on the vault and floor exercises.

A total of 26 Bloxwich members competed in the Potteries with Abbey Hargreaves striking gold in the under-13 individual event while the club's under-13 and under-11 beginners also stood on top of the podium. Freya Jackson rounded off a brilliant day by picking up a silver in the under-11 category.

Coach Elaine Mills, who runs the club with the help of her daughter, Sara, and grandaughter, Lucia, was full of praise for the youngsters but had to admit the success came as something of a shock.

"It was quite a shock actually," said Mills, who has been coaching for over 30 years. "We were hoping to win a couple but didn't expect them to be gold.

Specific

"The kids work really hard, and my daughter and granddaughter have trained them hard in their specific moves. The did present themselves really well on the day and worked really hard.

"We were there from 7.30 in the morning to 8.30 at night. It was a very long day and instead of them doing one age group at a time they mixed the age groups around.

"So you had to wait for the organisers to announce who was in the running to finish in the first three. But they didn't give you the order. So we knew we were in the running but when they announced the golds at the end it was a pleasant shock."

The medal haul added to the feelgood factor at the club, where membership is rising with demand leading to an increase in classes.

Mills is keen to stress that enjoyment is the main objective at the family-run club.

"I have been coaching nearly 40 years and I am helped by my daughter and grandaughter," said Mills, who also carried the Olympic torch during the build up to the 2012 Games in London.

"We are a recreational club, which means anyone can come along and have a go. They don't have to pass any sort of qualifying agenda. The main thing is enjoyment.

SPORTING FEATURE

By Nick Elwell

"We are a recreational club, which means anyone can come along and have a go. The main thing is enjoyment"

"For the West Midlands Championships any child who wanted to enter could. We didn't choose or select. Then we put the ones that wanted to enter into teams in terms of their ability and we happened to have some good teams. They all worked really well."

The club has found some much-needed stability after a series of name changes and moves and are based at the Ryecroft Community Hub in Walsall.

"Orginally we were Cannock Gym Club, then we were Moat Hall and now we are Bloxwich Gym Club, which has been in existence probably four years," continued Mills. "This particular success is the first one we have had as Bloxwich. We did used to win a few things years and years ago.

"We have had a lot of disturbance with trying to get places that would store our equipment.

"We had to go from one place to the other and then we went to Bloxwich Leisure Centre and that was pulled down, so we had to find another place which was Ryecroft. A lot of schools are not community schools so they don't want to open at night or store your equipment."

And with a waiting list, Mills and Co will be introducing extra sessions.

"The classes are on Wednesdays at the moment but that will be expanding to Tuesdays as well after Easter because we have got a waiting list," added Mills.

"We cater for children from five up to 18.

"The club is thriving, the membership has increased year on year.

"It's mainly been through word of mouth but hopefully out recent success will encourage more youngsters to join.

Anyone wishing to join the club should call Elaine Mills on 07971 378425.

Success on track tinged with tragedy

THE opening British Superbike weekend was packed full of tremendous highs for Staffordshire and Black Country riders – but will ultimately be remembered for tragedy.

A multiple motorcycle accident during the opening Ducati TriOptions Cup race at Donington Park ended with Mick Whalley, of Sheppey, Kent, suffering serious injuries, from which he eventually died. Leicestershire Police and the Motorcycle Circuit Racing Control Board are investigating.

On the track, Brierley Hill-born Michael Rutter, aged 44, got his BSB season under way with two third-placed finishes in Superstock 1000cc Championship, racing fourth in another.

Hednesford twins Kurt and Matt Wigley enjoyed their 'usual up and down weekend' as numerous mechanical issues were mixed in with some positive lap times. The 20-year-olds are battling on two fronts this year, with Kurt in the Supersport and Matt in the Superstock 1000 series.

Josh Hiatt, 13, from Heath Hayes, banished his debut BSB nerves to come away with very positive 12th, 10th and 15th place results in the KTM British Junior Cup.

The BSB series now move to Brands Hatch, Kent, this weekend.

Triathletes face an uphill task in sprint

BLACK Country Triathletes faced an uphill battle in the Sandwell Hill Horror Sprint aquathlon at Hayden Hill. The killer hill course comprised 400m pool swim followed by a four-lap course of the park.

Ollie Mason was first home for the club in 28:34, finishing sixth overall. Zoe Brickley was the first female home. Several junior athletes took on the hilly course, Zach Taylor, Noah Sandland, Tom Hipwood and Cian Gopal in the TS3 age group. For the girls Sydney Williams and Jenny Price.

In the TS2 category were Alex Westbury, Abbie Kennard, Isabell Mason Rosie Briscoe and Leah Gopal, while at TS1 was Scarlett Williams.

New BCT member John Tibbetts celebrated his 50th birthday with his first open water triathlon in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. Despite a longer swim due to disorientation in open water, John made up time on the bike and run and finished in 1:25:28 and 32nd overall.

In the British Schools Biathlon Championships at Crystal Palace, which involves swimming and running with a rest in between each discipline, Zoe Brickley came seventh out of 27 in the u-16s, Holly Briscoe 49th out of 83 in the u-13s, Abbie Kennard 44th of 147 in the u-12s and Rosie Briscoe 56th of 162 in the u-11s.

Neal spins out in seasonal opener

STOURBRIDGE'S Matt Neal is 11th in the British Touring Cars Championship standings following the season opener at Brands Hatch.

Halfords Yuasa Racing driver Neal span out in the first of three races after colliding with Colin Turkington's BMW. He then finished 11th in the second race and fourth in the last.

Neal's good friend and team-mate 'Flash' Gordon Shedden – who claimed a third BTCC crown at the end of the 2016 campaign – tops the standings.

Tom Ingram, who won the opening race, is second and Andrew Jordan – who won the last one – is in third.

On spinning out in the first race, Neal said: "It's probably the shortest race I have ever done. I got a bit of wheel spin off the start – the start wasn't bad – and Colin seemed to get a blinding start from behind me.

"We then went for a gap which was ever decreasing.

"Whether he tried to punch his way through a hole or not, I don't know – but it didn't work."

Three-time BTCC champion Neal will hope to fare better and jump up the standings at Donnington Park on Saturday and Sunday.

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Sport

Head over heels, gym club floors its rivals

Page 43

Victory but injury jinx strikes again

Ilkeston 1 Stourbridge 2

STOURBRIDGE got a nervy win at Ilkeston with a goal in each half to beat the home side, who were relegated after this loss.

The Glassboys are still in a play-off place but need to keep winning to consolidate it, with some of their rivals having games in hand.

They took the lead on six minutes when a ball from Luke Benbow saw Ethan Jones beat the Ilkeston 'keeper to the ball and he got enough on it for it to go into the net.

Jones nearly made it two on 12 minutes but his shot hit the keeper's foot and Benbow and Brad Birch shot wide as Stourbridge toiled in vain.

They were made to rue missed chances on 33 minutes when Daryl Westlake was adjudged to have fouled Tom Gamblen in the area and Anthony Dwyer made no mistake with the spot kick.

Broken

Just before half time, Stourbridge's injury jinx struck again when Richard Sho-Silva suffered a broken jaw after a clash of heads with team mate Kayelden Brown and was taken to hospital. He remained in hospital in Derby overnight and will miss the rest of the season.

In the 59th minute Kennedy Digie latched onto a long Tom Tonks' throw into the box to score after a goalmouth scramble.

Benbow also went close and substitute Jordan Archer should have done better late on from close range but scuffed his shot wide.

Better news for Gary Hackett's side, who sit fourth in the Evo-Stik Northern Premier Division, is that defender Dan Preston and midfielder Leon Broadhurst should return to action his weekend.

Sweet return for Perry as Heathens take bragging rights

CRADLEY Heathens are expecting a bumper crowd for their Bank Holiday Monday clash with Mildenhall at Wolverhampton, 7.30pm.

The club announced over the weekend all children aged 12 and under will be admitted free.

They pulled off a hard fought win at Birmingham last Wednesday after seeing off King's Lynn in style on opening night. And whilst it's very early, the signs are encouraging and big winter signing Danny Ayres believes the team will only improve as the season progresses.

He said: "We are here to do a job and will not rest until we see it through."

Ayres has formed a formidable partnership with Tom Perry at the top end of the team.

"Let's hope we can make it three wins on the trot against Mildenhall on Monday. I'm ready for them and the rest of the boys are too," he added.

Former Brummies loanee Perry made a stunning return to former club Birmingham by helping Cradley to a West Midlands Trophy win.

Hospice is winner at charity golf day

Golf

MARY Stevens Hospice is the winner from SDL Bigwood's annual charity golf day

SDL Bigwood's annual golf day raised a fantastic £3,159 for Mary Stevens Hospice.

The event, held for the 14th year at Edgbaston Golf Club, was won by Stourbridge-based Hayburn Rock Financial Planning and traditionally the victors get to nominate the charity of their choice.

The team comprised Stephen Perks, managing director, Richard Chapman, Daryl Chance and Brian Flint.

Mr Perks and Rory Daly, chief executive of SDL Bigwood, presented a cheque to Alex Winstanley, corporate engagement officer for Mary Stevens Hospice.

The hospice offers specialist care for people living with cancer and other life-limiting illnesses, as well as dedicated support for their families and carers.

It is currently seeking to raise £3 million to expand its day unit facility.

Stephen Perks, Hayburn Rock, said: "We are pleased to nominate Mary Stevens Hospice as the recipient of this charitable donation.

"We have a close association with the charity and see first-hand the tremendous work that they do. Thanks also to SDL Bigwood who have made this donation possible by organising such a great event."

Rory Daly, SDL Bigwood, said: "Hayburn Rock have been great supporters of our Charity Golf Day over many years and we are delighted that they won.

"Furthermore, their choice of Mary Stevens Hospice as the beneficiary of all the monies raised went down very well with everyone here."

LATE RECOVERY DENIED DKS

Stratford 36 Dk 29

SATURDAY'S game was a wonderful advert for Midlands 1 West rugby, with 10 tries in the match.

It was certainly, a game of two halves, DK were 26-14 up at half time, and the second half was 22-3 to Stratford.

First to test the Stratford defence was Dave Pitt, who received the ball on the right, made good ground, chipped his man but the kick was the winner to the dead ball line. On the left wing Tommy Walker was released and made 50 metres ball in hand before the defence got to him.

It was an intervention from full-back Nic Adams that led to the first try. He collected a weighted Tommy Huggins kick that landed in the Stratford 22, offloaded for Dan Marsh to crash over for the opening try. Tommy Huggins added the conversion.

A poor offload saw Callum Cook pounce on the loose ball and the converted try meant the scores were level.

DK forced a mistake in the Stratford 22 and were awarded a scrummage, with the ball secured Liam Marshall came back into contact, he found Luke Greenwood on a supporting line from the scrummage and was able to make it to the line. Huggins on target again.

The pressure was released and Stratford scored another try which levelled the score 14-14.

DK took the initiative again and this time their multi-phase play produced an overlap with Arran Hudson and Luke Greenwood both doing an excellent job, freeing Dave Pitt to have another run to the line, for DK's third try, 19-14.

When Stef Shillingford almost made it to the line, scrum-half Connah Jones was on hand to receive the offload to add to his try haul. Huggins was reliable again.

The second half opened with Stratford scoring a try within minutes of the restart, 19-26, then a penalty in front of the posts for DK saw Huggins extend the lead with the ensuing maul saw the conversion kept DK i front.

But DK lost Matt Squire to a yellow card, and Stratford took advantage to regain the lead

DK took two points from the game, but it could easily have been five. That must be the aim for such matches in the next campaign.

OSH see off late rally to lift bowl

OSH players and staff lift the under-18s NatWest Bowl at Sixways Stadium

OLD Swinford Hospital are celebrating after winning the u-18 NatWest Bowl Final. They beat St Olave's Grammar School 25-13 at Sixways Stadium.

The Stourbridge school qualified for the national final following wins over Gloucester, Sussex and Surrey. The final felt more like a home game for OSH as many of the players have connections with Worcester Warriors through their EPDG outreach programme.

A huge number of travelling supporters including current and former pupils, staff and parents turned out to cheer the boys on.

Worcester Warriors players, and former OSH students, Chris Pennell, Sam Ripper-Smith, Max Stelling and Huw Taylor supported from the stands. Pennell, who captained the OSH 1st XV in 2004 before joining the Warriors, presented the boys with their match jerseys prior to kick off.

OSH led 13-0 at half-time and Tobi Costello crashed over after the break. But St Olave's staged a magnificent comeback.

After a well-worked try, OSH centre Hugh Peel was sent to the sin bin and on his return, team-mate Finn Bridgewater was binned. With St Olave's playing against 14 men they scored again and kicked a penalty in the last five minutes to make it 18-13. But OSH rallied and Charlie Simmonds made the game safe.

From DK to the Danube

THERE was very little on the cards for athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club with many holding their breath before a tilt at the London Marathon and others just getting back into training after their marathon efforts.

Only one club member pulled on the vest in anger at the weekend and he had to travel some distance to do so making the journey to the capital of Hungary to take part on the Telekom Vivicitta Spring Half Marathon, effectively the Budapest Half. Dave Ede crossed the Danube twice to finish in 1.52.07 to place 1695th.

Hopefully he will be back and fit to compete in the clubs flagship race, the DK10k sponsored by London & Cambridge Properties and with the race around three weeks away there are still places available for anyone inspired by the blue hoops endeavours over the winter months. The race takes place on May 3 at 7.15pm from Dudley Kingswinford Rugby Club. Entry forms are available from the club or enter online at www.runbritain.com.

Blyth spirit proves too strong for Yeltz

Blyth Spartans 3 Halesowen Town 0

HALESOWEN failed to act as party poopers as Blyth secured the league title and promotion to Conference North. But the good news is that at the other end of the table Halesowen are now safe, with Frickley Athletic losing on the day.

It was a depleted side who travelled to the North East and Blyth who made the running from the start. Dan Platt had to be alert in the early stages to twice deny the home side but dominance was rewarded in the 18th minute when Luke Armstrong scored.

Platt brilliantly denied Dan Maguire to keep Yeltz in it at the break but on 50 minutes it was 2-0 when Reid headed home a corner, and then made it three with 12 minutes to go.

Have a go at bowls club open green day

WOULD-BE members can roll up for an open day at Crystal Bowls Club next weekend.

The club, which plays flat green bowls at Lye & Wollescote Park, Wollescote Road, is hosting to the event on Saturday, April 22, from 11am to 4pm.

Anyone interested in trying their hand at bowls will be made most welcome. Bring flat soled shoes for use on the green, all other equipment will be provided. Come along at any time during the day or for more details, ring the secretary on (01384) 371106.

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£949 CONCERTO KINGSIZE BEDSTEAD
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SAVE £450

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BEDS & BEDROOMS

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REST ASSURED MEMORY 800
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SILENTNIGHT MOONSTONE
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